



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>





P4  
15

~~Arch. J. X. 13.~~  
1016 e 709







A PRACTICAL  
EXPOSITION  
OF OUR  
SAVIOUR'S SERMON  
ON THE  
MOUNT.

---

By *JAMES GARDINER*, M. A.  
Subdean and Canon<sup>y</sup> Residentiary  
of the Church of *Lincoln*.

---

The FOURTH EDITION.

---

L O N D O N:

Printed for BERNARD LINTOT, at the  
*Cross-Keys*, between the two *Temple Gates*  
in *Fleetstreet*. M.DCC.XX.





THE  
CONTENTS.

The INTRODUCTION.

MATT. V. 1, 2.



AND seeing the multitudes he went up into a mountain; and when he was set, his disciples came unto him; — And he open'd his mouth, and taught them, saying, &c. Page i.

CHAP. I.

Of POVERTY of SPIRIT.

MATT. V. 4.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Page i.

CHAP. II.

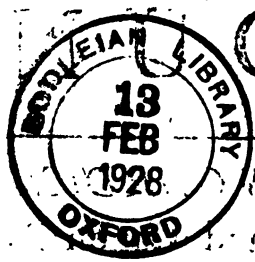
Of MOURNING.

MATT. V. 7.

Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. P. 15.

THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

LIBRARY



13 FEB 1928

LIBRARY

OXFORD

13 FEB 1928



THE

# CONTENTS.

## The INTRODUCTION.

MATT. V. 1, 2.



AND seeing the multitudes he went up into a mountain; and when he was set, his disciples came unto him; — And he open'd his mouth, and taught them, saying, &c. Page i.

## CHAP. I.

### Of POVERTY of SPIRIT.

MATT. V. 4.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Page i.

## CHAP. II.

### Of MOURNING.

MATT. V. 5.

Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. P. 15.

# The CONTENTS.

## CHAP. III.

### Of MEEKNESS.

MATT. V. 5.

*Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.*  
p. 36.

## CHAP. IV.

### Of hungering and thirsting after RIGHTEOUSNESS.

MATT. V. 6.

*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.* p. 69.

## CHAP. V.

### Of MERCY.

MATT. VI. 7.

*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.*  
p. 82.

## CHAP. VI.

### Of PURITY of HEART.

MATT. V. 8.

*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*  
p. 100.

CHAP.

# The C O N T E N T S.

## C H A P. VII.

### Of P E A C E.

MATT. V. 9.

*Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God.* P. 123.

## C H A P. VIII.

### Of PERSECUTION for Righteousness sake.

MATT. V. 10, 11, 12.

*Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake.*

*Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you.* P. 145.

## C H A P. IX.

### Of E X E M P L A R I N E S S.

MATT. V. 13, 14, 15, 16.

*Ye are the salt of the earth; but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.*

*Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.*

*Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel: but on a candlestick, and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.*



## THE CONTENTS.

*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.* P. 161, 162.

### CHAP. X.

*Of the Excellence of the Christian Morality, above that of the Jews.*

MATT. V. 17, 18, 19, 20.

*Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the Prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.*

*Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do, and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.*

*For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.* P. 177, 178.

### CHAP. XI.

*Of causeless anger, and of scornful and censorious language.*

MATT. V. 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26.

*Ye have heard, that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill: and whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment.*

*But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother,*

# THE CONTENTS.

*brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council:  
But whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in  
danger of hell-fire.*

*Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and  
there remembreſt that thy brother hath ought againſt  
thee;*

*Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy  
way, firſt be reconciled to thy brother, and then  
come and offer thy gift.*

*Agree with thine adverſary quickly, whiles thou art  
in the way with him: leſt at any time the adver-  
ſary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deli-  
ver thee to the officer, and thou be caſt into priſon.*

*Verily I ſay unto thee, Thou ſhalt by no means come  
out thence, till thou haſt paid the uttermoſt far-  
thing.*

P. 194. 195.

## CHAP. XII.

### Of CHASTITY, and of needleſſe SEPARA- TION after Marriage.

MATT. V. 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32.

*Ye have heard that it hath been ſaid by them of old  
time, Thou ſhalt not commit adultery.*

*But I ſay unto you, That whosoever looketh on a  
woman to luſt after her, hath committed adultery  
with her already in his heart.*

*And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and  
caſt it from thee; for it is profitable for thee, that  
one of thy members ſhould periſh, and not that thy  
whole body ſhould be caſt into hell.*

*And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and  
caſt it from thee; for it is profitable for thee, that  
one of thy members ſhould periſh, and not that thy  
whole body ſhould be caſt into hell.*

*It hath been ſaid, Whoſoever ſhall put away his  
wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement.*

## THE CONTENTS.

*But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery; and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced, committeth adultery.*

P. 212, 213.

### CHAP. XIII.

#### *Of taking God's Name in vain.*

MATT. V. 33, 34, 35, 36, 37.

*Again, ye have heard, That it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths. But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by Heaven, for it is God's throne:*

*Nor by the earth, for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.*

*Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.*

*But let your communication be yea, yea; nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these, cometh of evil.*

P. 227.

### CHAP. XIV.

#### *Of FORGIVING of INJURIES.*

MATT. V. 38, 39, 40, 41, 42.

*Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.*

*But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.*

*And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.*

*And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him willingly.*

Give

## The CONTENTS.

*Give to him that asketh thee, and from him thou  
would borrow of thee; turn not thou away. p. 237.*

### CHAP. XV.

#### *Of the loving of Enemies.*

MATT. V. 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48,

*Ye have heard, that it hath been said, Thou shalt  
love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.*

*But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them  
that curse you, do good to them that hate you,  
and pray for them which despitefully use you, and  
persecute you.*

*That ye may be the children of your Father which is  
in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the  
evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the  
just, and on the unjust.*

*For if ye love them which love you, what reward  
have ye? Do not even the publicans the same?*

*And if ye salute your brethren only, what do you  
more than others? Do not even the publicans so?*

*Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which  
is in heaven is perfect.*

P. 249.

### CHAP. XVI.

#### *Of ALMS-GIVING.*

MATT. VI. 1, 2, 3, 4

*Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to  
be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of  
your Father which is in heaven.*

*Therefore, when thou dost thine alms, do not sound a  
trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do, in the  
synagogues, and in the streets, that they may have  
glory of men. Verily I say unto you, they have  
their reward.*

*But*

# THE CONTENTS.

*But when thou dost alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth :*

*That thine alms may be in secret : and thy Father which seeth in secret, himself shall reward thee openly.*

P. 262.

## CHAP. XVII.

### OF PRAYER.

MATT. VI. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15.

*And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are : for they love to pray standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.*

*But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.*

*But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do : for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.*

*Be not ye therefore like unto them : for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.*

*After this manner therefore pray ye : Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name.*

*Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.*

*Give us this day our daily bread.*

*And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.*

*And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil : for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.*

For,

## The C O N T E N T S.

*For, if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.*

*But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. p. 274, 275.*

### C H A P. XVIII.

#### Of F A S T I N G.

MATT. VI. 16, 17, 18.

*Moreover when ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.*

*But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face:*

*That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly. p. 290.*

### C H A P. XIX.

*Of not laying up treasures upon earth, but of laying them up in heaven, and of trust in God's providence.*

MATT. VI. 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33.

*Lay not up for your selves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal.*

*But lay up for your selves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal.*

For

## The C O N T E N T S.

*For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

*The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.*

*But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness?*

*No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.*

*Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on: is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?*

*Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?*

*Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?*

*And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lillies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin.*

*And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.*

*Wherefore if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven; shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?*

*Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or wherewithal shall we be clothed?*

*For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.*

*But*

## THE CONTENTS.

*But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.*

*Take therefore no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of it self: sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.* p. 302,  
303, 304.

## CHAP. XX.

### OF CENSURE *and* OF REPROOF.

MATT. vii. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.

*Judge not, that ye be not judged.*

*For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.*

*And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?*

*Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye, and behold a beam is in thine own eye?*

*Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.*

*Give not that which is holy unto dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rent you,*

P. 333.

## CHAP.



# The CONTENTS.

## CHAP. XXI.

*Of Importunity in Prayer, and of doing as we would be done by.*

MATT. vii. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12.

*Ask and it shall be given you: Seek and ye shall find: Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.*

*For every one that asketh, receiveth: And he that seeketh, findeth: And to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.*

*Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?*

*Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?*

*If ye then bring evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him?*

*Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: For this is the law and the Prophets.*

P. 344.

## CHAP. XXII.

*Of the Difficulties of the CHRISTIAN LIFE.*

MATT. vii. 13, 14.

*Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat.*

*Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*

P. 363.

CHAP.

# The CONTENTS.

## CHAP. XXIII.

### *Of False Teachers.*

MATT. vii. 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20.

*Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheeps clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.*

*Ye shall know them by their fruits: Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?*

*Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit: But a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.*

*A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit: Neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.*

*Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire.*

*Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.* p. 375.

## CHAP. XXIV.

### *Of the necessity of obeying the foregoing Precepts.*

MATT. vii. 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27.

*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: But he that doeth the will of my Father, which is in heaven.*

*Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works?*

*And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: Depart from me ye that work iniquity.*

*Therefore,*

## The CONTENTS.

*Therefore, 'whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock;*

*And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house: And it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock.*

*And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand.*

*And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house: And it fell, and great was the fall of it.* p. 389, 390.

## The CONCLUSION.

MATT. vii. 28, 29.

*And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine.*

*For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes.* p. 402.





# THE INTRODUCTION.



MATTH. V. 1, 2.

*And seeing the multitudes he went up into a mountain; and when he was set, his disciples came unto him, — And he open'd his mouth and taught them, saying, &c.*



THESE words are the preface to the narrative of our Saviour's sermon on the mount, where having lately enter'd upon his prophetick office, he began to discharge his authority by delivering a new and more excellent, a more refin'd and spiritual Law than that of *Moses*; a nobler and more perfect system of morality than either *Jews* or *Gentiles* understood before. As he came down from the eternal glory to *enlighten*, as well as from the everlasting arms of mercy to *redeem* the world; 'twas necessary he should not only die a sacrifice for us on the cross, that we might be admitted to the

inheritance of life and happiness above, but by his instructions also *show us the way* to that better country where our hopes and inheritance are; and so direct us how to qualify our selves for that heavenly state of purity and perfection, that we *may be capable of it*; that the most absolute holiness of God may not be rashly encroach'd upon, in confidence of his infinite mercy. Now all this is sufficiently provided for in the laws and precepts of Christianity, laid down in the *New Testament*, in the writings of the Apostles, but especially in the sermons of our Lord himself, and more particularly in this before us, which as it is the longest, so it is one of the clearest and most practical of all his public discourses, and plainly lays the foundation of the whole Christian moral law. Now by way of introduction to what the following volume will present you with, I think it necessary to consider, (1.) The solemnity observ'd by our Saviour in the publication of this part of his doctrine. (2.) The auditors to whom he deliver'd it. And (3.) The sermon it self, with respect to two general observations which ought to be made upon it.

I. *THE solemnity of the publication*: And to this the circumstances of it lead us. It is here to be observ'd,

*FIRST*, That he laid so great a stress upon the matter of these instructions, that he would not entirely leave them to the after-care of his Apostles, tho' they in the discharge of their ministry, for the edification of his Church, were to be guided by the holy Spirit, which should *lead them into all truth*; but to stamp the more awful character upon them, made use of the authority of his own Person in delivering them out to his Disciples; as God had done before, when he pronounced the Ten Commandments from mount Sinai. And this ob-

servations

servation will receive greater force if we consider that it was GOD who still spake personally to them, tho' veil'd and shrouded in our human nature. It was not indeed deliver'd with that pomp and terror as before; because, as the \* *Israelites* were not then, mankind is still not able to bear the lustre and majesty of the divine presence without some alloy. And God had promis'd, when he gratify'd the people of *Israel* † in their request upon that occasion, issuing out the other remainder of his will to them by the intervention of *Moses*, that when he should bless them with a second more compleat revelation of his will in the future age of the Church, he would in like manner, comply with their infirmity. *I will raise them up a prophet* (said the Lord to *Moses*) *from among their brethren like unto thee, and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.* This promise was now fulfill'd in Christ, who was both GOD and MAN in one person. His divine nature gave solemnity and sanction to his law; for, as the Evangelist takes notice at the conclusion of this sermon on the mount, *He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes*: His human nature, by which he was of the seed of *Israel*, represented him as that Prophet from among their brethren like unto *Moses*, and render'd the delivery of it more gracious in the hands of such a Mediator. But,

SECONDLY, We may observe that in farther imitation of that solemn precedent, the giving of the moral law to the *Jews* from mount *Sinai*, Christ deliver'd his instructions also from a mountain: He retir'd from the promiscuous multitude, who crowded after him to gaze upon his person only, or to see his miracles, and not to be instructed

\* Exod. xx. 18, 19.

† Deut. xviii. 17, 18.

in the way to happiness, and went up into a mountain, where only those would take the pains to follow him who were acted by *conscience* more than curiosity, and desir'd rather to learn their duty, than be furnish'd with surprizing things to be talk'd of. And hither accordingly such as these came to him: For the true Christian must stick at no difficulties in following Christ, however steep the access may be, and however singular they may seem in leaving the multitudes behind them.

*THIRDLY*, Having thus provided that none but pious ears should hear him, (such only being worthy of these sublime instructions) *He sat down*, a posture, us'd indeed by the *Jewish* doctors in their schools and synagogues, but becoming only *him*, who had, and shew'd hereby, the authority of a Legislator. And being thus seated, he began to teach his auditors. But,

II. Who these auditors were is next to be consider'd. And by them we are here to understand, not only *the twelve*, who were afterwards stil'd Apostles, but the whole body of his *Disciples*, all such of that mix'd multitude in the plain as were touch'd with a belief, that he was a Prophet sent from God, and *heard him*, as *Herod* heard the *Baptist*, gladly, and were willing to embrace the doctrine he should teach them. For that *the whole multitude* of such as had this good disposition in them, are call'd his *Disciples*, as well as *the twelve*, is evident from several passages in the history of our Saviour. And that his auditors here are to be taken in such a latitude, is plain.

I. From this, That the Apostles were not nam'd and chosen, nay, some of them were not then so much as call'd to be *Disciples*. For St. *Matthew*\*, who

\* Matth. ix. 9.

## INTRODUCTION;

V.

best knew the time, gives not the account of *his own* being call'd 'till a considerable time after this sermon was deliver'd.

2. THAT the necessary and particular instructions which concern'd the Apostles as such, viz. as preachers and publishers of this doctrine \*, are deliver'd in another place. So that what was utter'd in this discourse upon the mountain, concern'd the twelve (those of them who were present) rather as *Disciples* than *Apostles*.

3. THE matter or argument of it, as a collection or body of certain precepts for the ordering of a religious life, can with no manner of reason be apply'd peculiarly to his Apostles, but must be of equal concern to all his followers, to the whole Christian Church. And,

4. AT the close of this sermon it is expressly said, *the people, πῶς ὄχλοι, the multitudes were astonish'd at his doctrine.* So that the number must be greater than those twelve. The only observation I shall draw from this enquiry, and the conclusion form'd upon it, is, that the following precepts belong not to the *Apostles* and their *successors*, the Bishops and Clergy of the Church, in a particular and distinguishing manner, but in general to the *whole body of Christians*; to all who were, or are, or ever shall be admitted into Christ's Religion, and expect salvation by him. I proceed now,

III. To consider the *sermon it self*, with regard to two general observations which ought to be made upon it.

THE first is, that Christ was herein the author of a *new law*. He improv'd the moral law, deliver'd by *God* and *Moses* to the *Jews*, to a much greater height and severity of duty than it was

\* Matth. x.



thought to extend to, or really did extend, before. I do not say he absolutely laid a new foundation; for that he admitted those ancient elements and principles of morality, is plain, by his insisting in this discourse (either directly, or by oblique reference) upon the several articles of it, as laid down in the old *Jewish* law. But the additions he made, and his improvements of them, are such as the *Jews* had never learn'd, their doctors never taught before. For this reason our Saviour tells his followers, \* that *except their righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, they should in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.* Their Scribes were the publick expounders of the law; the Pharisees, not only the severest sect among them in their pretences to piety and purity of manners, and the most rigid observers of the law, but doctors also who undertook to instruct others in it, and were always forward speakers upon that occasion; and yet the highest and the strictest sense they either practis'd, or understood, or taught it in, fell very short of the measures of improvement which Christ by divine authority refin'd and rais'd it to. Accordingly, in the 17th verse of this fifth chapter of *St. Matthew*, he says of himself, *Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil: viz. to perfect and compleat it.* For by law there we are not to understand the *ceremonial*, (for that he came indeed to put an end to, so soon as he should have first fulfill'd it, by the great expiatory sacrifice of himself, which was the substance mystically pointed at in all those legal services:) but the *moral* law, which he fulfill'd, by filling up those lines and measures of perfection which were not (or at least were undiscover'd) in the former literal obligation.

\* Matth. v. 20.

'Tis true, this has enlarg'd our duty in many particulars, more than *nature* or than *Moses* told us of; but that's the *excellence* of the Christian Religion. And 'tis highly *reasonable* that we should be call'd up by it to an higher pitch of virtue, and a train of duties greater than before, because the *rewards* propos'd, the promises of life and salvation made to the observers of it (which were but imperfectly and obscurely hinted to the *Jews*, and scarcely thought of by the *Gentiles*, except by some few, and that with great uncertainty,) are reveal'd, by the same Gospel, in the fullest and clearest light. The *helps* and *assurances* also to perform what is requir'd of us, are proportionably greater than were given before; and therefore the Gospel is call'd \* *the administration of the spirit*; the grace and influence of the holy Spirit of God being more abundantly pour'd out upon the Disciples of *Christ*, than ever they were upon those of *Moses*. And because such mighty encouragements and assurances are given, it is no wonder that our work and business is increas'd, and that it exceeds the natural abilities and strength of men. It may be objected, perhaps, that Christ has affirm'd of his own institution, † that it is a *light and easy burden*; and that St. *John* hath taught us, ‡ *his commandments are not grievous*. But it may be answer'd, that as the ceremonial law, to which the *Jews* were subject, was apparently troublesome and uneasy, *a yoke which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear*; it was very proper to recommend the Christian Law to them under the contrary character of *easiness*, which certainly belongs to it in comparison with the other, because he erected this new superstructure upon old foundations, beating out only such propositions as were before indeed

\* 2 Cor. iii. 8. † Matth. xi. 30. ‡ 1 John v. 3.

in the mass and substance; or at least making up for what he added by the more powerful effusions of his grace and spirit to assist us. If it be objected, that Christianity, as to the practical or moral part of it, is therefore no *new institution*, because, as we observ'd just now, it is very much built upon the old foundation of *Moses* and the Prophets, and there wanted not many excellent persons in the ancient *Jewish* Church, who in the light of that dispensation only could see beyond the letter of their law, and shew'd by their practice they understood it in a severer sense; it is not hard to reply, That this may be resolv'd into particular revelations and assistances from God, to draw those nearer to himself whom he found dispos'd to come: And these illuminations were not unfrequent amongst the zealots and prophets, who were oftentimes acted by the Spirit of God, and exceeded the common measures of sanctity and religion; but the particulars might nevertheless not be then enjoin'd so positively, as in this discourse of our Saviour's; for surely had they been design'd a part of the *Jewish* law, as well as of the *Christian*, they would have been more clearly and punctually inserted in the body of the precepts, by which that Church was to be govern'd. These eminent examples therefore are instances out of the common road, and influenc'd by a special illumination; tho' living under the law they were inspir'd with an higher principle, enjoy'd a foretaste of the spiritual beauties of the Gospel, going beyond the bounds of common practice and obligation; aim'd at a more perfect piety and virtue than what the religion of their country taught them, and were a law to themselves where the *Mosaical* law was carnal and imperfect. So that my observation is still conclusive, that the doctrine of Christ was a *new institution*. And the uses we are to make of this are two,

## I. THAT

1. THAT we should pay a suitable reverence to it. \* *If he that despised Moses law died without mercy, of how much sorer punishment suppose ye shall he be thought worthy, who has trodden under foot the Son of God, and done despite unto the Spirit of grace?*

2. THAT we should *suit our lives and conversations* to it. Is the Christian law and improvement beyond all former systems of morality, a new injunction from above, with a much larger compass of precepts, and much greater certainty of rewards? and shall we Christians content our selves with the ceremonial holiness and imperfect morals of a *Jew*, or the obscure awkward virtues of an *Heathen*? Our conversations surely ought to be improv'd, in proportion to the doctrine we profess. Our righteousness ought to *exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees*; to be more sincere, and inward, and universal, as the law we are under is more refined, and spiritual, and extensive. But I proceed to the second general observation upon this sermon in the mount; and that is,

THAT it seems to be a different sermon from that recorded by St. *Luke* in the sixth chapter of his Gospel. Some interpreters, it's true, are of another opinion, and take them both to be the same, because there are many particulars of both in the same words and order; both directed to his Disciples, and not to the promiscuous multitude; and it might be thought strange that St. *Luke*, who was a studious collector of all the remarkable passages in our Saviour's life and preaching, should omit an instance so material as this discourse upon the mountain. But this last is no argument, because it's certain he has omitted a great and noble variety of discourses, and of very great importance, recorded

\* Heb. x. 28, 29.

## INTRODUCTION.

between our Saviour and the Jews, for of his divinity and mission. Beside that of his sermons so very like to Matthew, and so many of the same doctrines, he might not think it requisite to repeat both. And that the two former grounds of their opinion have as little in them, will appear from the reasons which are given why those sermons are not the same. As,

1. St. Luke's omission of several material parts of the discourse recorded by St. Matthew; as the *third*, the *sixth*, and *seventh* chapters; the directions for regulation of prayer, alms and fasting; that noble representation of the providence of God, related at the end of the sixth chapter; the promise that God will answer our prayers, &c. that is, in fewer words, from the 13th to the 29th verse of the *fifth* chapter of St. Matthew, the whole *sixth* chapter from verse 6 to verse the 16th of the

St. Matthew has but four Beatitudes, St. Matthew and even those which are in both, are *Blessed be ye poor*, says St. Matthew. *Blessed are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness*, the latter. *Blessed are ye for ye shall laugh*, says that *are they that mourn, for they shall laugh*, &c. But suppose the shorter in St. Luke, as the shorter in St. Matthew, ought to be interpreted larger and clearer.

al woes, of which other Evangelist. The sermon recorded only deliver'd before the healing

## INTRODUCTION.



healing of the leper; \* for when Christ was come down from the mountain, the leper came with his request to him; whereas St. *Luke*, who promises to relate things in their proper order, gives this miracle of healing the leper, *chap. v. 12.* and begins the sermon he has recorded, *chap. vi. 17.* So also St. *Luke* reckons † *Matthew* among the twelve whom Christ had chosen, and says, he went down with these twelve, and preached the sermon as it is there related; whereas St. *Matthew*, when the sermon which *he* has given us was delivered, was not a Disciple, for he relates not his own being call'd, 'till some time after.

5. As to the place and posture also, St. *Matthew* is express that the discourse was made by our Saviour, sitting, and on a mountain; St. *Luke* is as clear, that when he said what *he* records, he was *standing*, and on a plain.

6. THERE is a difference also in the directing of these two discourses; Blessed are *they*, in St. *Matthew*; Blessed are *ye*, in St. *Luke*. The former is a standing character to serve in all ages of the Church of Christ; the latter seems a particular address to the Disciples then about him, and an application to their present condition.

FROM all which it is thought reasonable to conclude, that the two Evangelists in these two places pretend not to deliver one and the same discourse, but that the like sayings and instructions being delivered at different times, each Evangelist has inserted them in their proper places, in the form as were then, and upon that occasion, delivered: importance of which conclusion is no more than this, that if they are two different discourses, there will be no necessity of interpreting and explaining the one by the other.

\* Matth. viii. 1, 2.

† Luke vi. 15.

HAVING

HAVING thus consider'd the sermon on the mount in general, 'tis fit we should a little reflect upon the Beatitudes in particular. And with these our Saviour begins, in publishing to the world that new dispensation of the Gospel, we have so often spoke of, establish'd upon better promises, and full of the most valuable blessings, that we might see the difference betwixt the promulgation of the former law and the latter. When the law was given from mount Sinai, \* *there were thunders and lightnings, and the voice of a trumpet exceeding loud, so that all the people that was in the camp trembled; the Lord descended upon the mount in fire, and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, the priests and people were kept at an awful distance, lest the Lord should break forth upon them and consume them.* But in the delivering of the Christian law it was far otherwise; our meek and merciful Saviour (as it was prophecy'd of him, that by him God would † *make a covenant of peace with his people, and make them and the places round about his hill a blessing*) begins it with all the mildness possible, and sheds abroad his blessings with a bounteous hand, represents the mighty beauties, and the great advantages of religion, that he may rather *allure* than compel men to an obedience which will make them happy. *Happiness* indeed or *bles-sedness* has always been the great enquiry of mankind, the common topic, or the grand conclusion propos'd by all the heathen masters of morality, but never clearly made out, never fully settled 'till our Saviour here determin'd it. The schools of philosophy at *Rome* and *Athens*, and elsewhere, argu'd themselves out of breath upon this subject, and pursu'd the controversy 'till they perplex'd the question with their various, wild, imperfect, and

\* Exod. xix.

† Ezek. xxxiv. 25, 26.

inconsistent schemes : But Almighty God, who confounds the wisdom of the wise, provided a more excellent way to manifest the truth in an affair of such importance, revealing it by his Son Christ Jesus, who was better qualify'd than all those philosophers to decide this case, being himself completely blessed as God, and tho' in human nature, free from the blindness, ignorance, and depraved affections of mankind. As such he was the fittest judge of true felicity ; he best knew what would make men happy, and gave in his own person and character a lively transcript of all that happiness he taught. That he was *poor in spirit*, humble and lowly, appears by his avoiding popular \* applause, declining power and honour, when the people would by force † have made him a King ; ascribing to God the glory of his miracles ‡ and his doctrine ; and giving thanks to God \* upon all occasions, even for the common benefits of life ; rejecting a state of wealth and plenty †, and living all his days in a poor and mean condition, as knowing that a man's happiness *consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth* ; and, in a word, tho' he was *equal with God* †, yet for our sakes he made himself of no reputation, took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man ; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to the death, even to the death of the cross. That he was a true mourner for the sins of others, and for their sufferings (those were the only sins he *could* mourn for, himself being without spot, of sin entirely innocent, and those the only sufferings he thought deserved † concern,) is evident from his pathetic \* lament-

\* Matth. viii. 4. Mark i. 45.

† John vi. 15.

‡ Luke viii. 39. \* Matth. xi. 25. John xi. 41.

† Matth. iv. 8, 9, 10. ‡ Phil. ii. 6, 7, 8.

‡ Luke xlii. 28. \* Mark xlii. 5. Luke xix. 41, 42.



ing the hardness and obstinacy of the *Jews*, and the fatal consequences of it in their utter ruin, which he foresaw. His *meekness* appears in many instances; towards God, in a most absolute † submission to his will under his most bitter sufferings; toward the governors of his country, both in church and state, by his frequenting the *Jewish* \* synagogues, submitting to pay † tribute, surrendering willingly to the high priest's officers, who † took him, and acknowledging and \* yielding to the civil power of *Pilate*, tho' he had done nothing which deserved his sentence; toward his parents, by a due subjection to † them; toward his enemies, by the most perfect patience under all their malice and reproaches, a cheerful forgiveness of them, labouring all his life to do them good, praying heartily for them upon the cross, and undergoing death for their redemption and salvation; toward his friends his Disciples, by bearing with their infirmities, and condescending to the lowest offices † of kindness and respect to them; toward his inferiors, that is indeed to all men, by the greatest humility and gentleness in every part of his conduct, as might be shewn, if I had time, in many particulars. That he \* *hungred and thirsted after righteousness*, will need little proof. He took care to fulfil all † righteousness himself; his whole life was spent in labouring to promote it amongst others, and he gave himself to death for us, to this very end, † that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works. His merciful temper shew'd it self in his tender and compassionate sense of every \* mi-

† John xviii. 11. Luke xxii. 42.

\* Luke iv. 16.

† Matth. xvii. 27.

† Matth. xxvi. 47, &c.

\* John xviii. 36.

† Luke ii. 51.

† John xiii. 4, 5.

\* Matth. iii. 15.

† John viii. 45.

† Tit. ii. 14.

\* Matth. xx. 34. Luke vii. 13.

terable object which came in his way, and his readiness to relieve them: His kind provision (made at the expence of a miracle) for the multitudes, ready to † faint with long attending upon him; his quitting the care of his own support † and necessary refreshment, to heal those who had need of healing; his practising charity \* to the poor, and recommending it to others as a kindness shewn † to himself. His mercy to his enemies, in forgiving and doing good to them, we have taken notice of above. The *purity of his heart* appears in the innocence of his life: † *For a good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil.* Not the worst of his enemies could charge him with an impure word or action, even those \* who were conscious of their own impurity. His *peaceable* disposition appears in several particulars abovementioned in the account of his meekness; and that he was indeed a *peace-maker*, we need only consider that he *spared not his own life, but gave it up upon the cross*, to reconcile us to our offended God, and put an end to that fatal quarrel which sin had caused betwixt him and us. And lastly, that he was persecuted for righteousness sake, the whole four Gospels sufficiently evidence, and I suppose no Christian will dispute it.

No doubt therefore, the *poor in spirit*, the religious *mourner*, the *meek*, those that *hunger and thirst after righteousness*, the *merciful*, the *pure in heart*, the *peace-makers*, and those that are *persecuted for righteousness sake*, are indeed the blessed and happy men; since he who has pronounc'd them so, had a most perfect knowledge of what true happi-

† Matth. xiv. 15.

† Luke ix. 11.

\* John xiii. 29.

† Matth. xxv. 35.

† Luke. vi. 45.

\* John viii. 9.

ness is, and having also the power of being as blessed and happy as he would, thought fit to place his own felicity in these qualities, and to recommend them to us by his own example. This one would think should be enough to fix our opinion, and to inspire our practice; yet lest our dull apprehensions, or corrupt and prejudiced nature should be still wavering, decline the practice, and not see or not believe the blessedness of it, he has condescended to a more *express* encouragement, explain'd the *particular way* whereby each of those qualifications shall render those who have them blessed, and annexed *particular rewards* to every one of them. So that now we have no excuse; we are called to holiness and virtue, and thereby to happiness; and not only called by way of precept and command, but invited and encourag'd too by all the Arguments (even from self-interest) which can be supposed to work upon any reasonable people. But if we will still be so obstinate and foolish, *like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear*, that we *will not bearken to the voice of the charmer charming never so wisely*: If neither the love of virtue, nor the rewards of it will move us, we must thank our selves if we be uneasy and miserable in this world, lose sight of *heaven and happiness* for ever, and spend a *sad eternity in regret and torment*.





A PRACTICAL  
EXPOSITION  
OF THE  
BEATITUDES.



CHAP. I.  
*Of POVERTY of SPIRIT.*

MATTH. V. 3.

*Blessed are the Poor in Spirit, for theirs is  
the Kingdom of Heaven.*



It will be necessary upon this head to  
consider,

I. THE character of the persons,  
the *poor in spirit*; or what qualifica-  
tions are implied in that expression.

C

II. THE

II. THE blessing assign'd and assured to persons so qualify'd, *the kingdom of heaven.*

**FIRST,** The character of the persons here spoken of, and who they are whom we may suppose our Saviour to have intended by the *poor in spirit*. Some interpreters understand this of poverty of *estate*, as if he had pronounced the blessing merely upon those who are miserable and necessitous in their condition as to the common things in this world: and hereupon the *Remise* Church has principally founded the monastick life, and voluntary poverty profess'd by vow and promise, with such a solemn shew of severity amongst them. But this blessing cannot reasonably be taken in such an extent: for tho' Christ our Saviour is the great fountain of pity and compassion, delights to ease and gratify the necessities of human nature, and the poor as such have a particular title to his providence, when piety and faith have taught them to depend upon it, and there are other promises in the holy Scriptures which may encourage their expectations in this kind; yet as to the blessing promised in the text, the poor are no farther concern'd in it than as their poverty may dispose them (if well and piously improved) to receive more readily that humble and self-denying doctrine which our Saviour opened to the world; and, like the preaching of the *Baptist*, prepare the minds of men for the belief and practice of true Christianity. 'Tis not to be thought that *therefore* men have larger communications of the grace of Christ here, and more just assurances of eternal glory hereafter, because they are *poor* and *low* in their outward circumstances: for in dispensing the blessings of his Gospel, he regards neither poor nor rich, any farther than by *repentance from dead works*, and the *belief*

## CHAP. I. Of Poverty of Spirit.

§

*belief of him*, they render themselves capable objects of his grace and favour; and we see, in fact, how many indigent people there are in the world, whose poverty, instead of qualifying them for saints on earth, and heirs of heaven, is the very occasion of their greater wickedness, by drawing them into distrust and murmuring, and unbelief towards God, and dishonesty, violence, and other injuries to their neighbour. These therefore cannot be the men to whom the *kingdom of heaven* (in any sense) peculiarly belongs. But those upon whom that blessing is here entail'd, are the *poor in spirit*; and who they are that may be properly accounted *poor in spirit*, will be perhaps sufficiently described in these four following heads.

I. SUCH as are *humble and lowly in spirit*, not lifted up with pride and vanity in the possession of worldly things. And I suppose the addition of those words [*in spirit*] which is the distinguishing character in the text, is principally for this purpose, that so the *rich* may be capable of the blessing and the kingdom too, as well as others. For Christ is the \* *Saviour of all men*, and has not so altered the government of things, as that to become his disciples men should necessarily quit their former state and posture in the world. For he who is *poor in spirit*, tho' his condition be honourable and rich, has nevertheless that temper and qualification which a poor man is supposed to have. His honour and riches do not swell him to a contempt of others. He does not † *sacrifice to his own nets*; ascribe all to his own industry and merit, nor look upon himself as really and substantially the better for all that wealth and power which he enjoys; but he reflects upon the no desert and title he can make before Almighty God. He considers the ‡ *clay out of which*

\* 1 Tim. iv. 10.

† Hab. i. 16.

‡ Job xxii. 6.

## 4                      *Of Poverty of Spirit.*                      CHAP. I.

he was form'd; and that as Job says of them, the rich and the poor \* *shall lie down alike in the dust, and the worms shall cover them*; so they were both made together, and the † *Lord was the maker of them both*. He does not think himself the greater favourite of heaven because he possesses so much more of this world than many others do; he knows that these are not the rewards which God reserves for those who love him. *Outward mercies and temporal enjoyments* are scattered by providence, as it were with a careless hand to good and bad men: for as to such things, ‡ *No man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before them*. There is one event to the righteous and to the wicked, to the good and to the clean and to the unclean, to him that sacrificeth and to him that sacrificeth not, as is the good so is the sinner, and he that sweareth as he that feareth an oath. And he considers besides, with deep humility and sorrow, the many sins he is guilty of before God, and therefore whatever wealth or honour he makes a figure with in the sight of men, he knows he is to stand or fall to another master, and to be judged at the bar of God by other measures. And such a man as this is properly one of those poor in spirit to whom the kingdom of heaven is promised. Riches indeed, as they are generally used, carry with them a very different temper, and render those who possess them, liable to great temptations and prejudices against the force of true religion: and for this cause I suppose it might be that the Church did anciently require their catechumens to profess their renunciation of the pomps and vanities of the world, which are the great enemies and corrupters of humility, and thereby declared that none are fit to be members of Christ, and subjects of his kingdom, but

\* Job xxi. 26.

† Prov. xxii. 2.

‡ Eccus. ix. 12.

such as are of humble minds, who tho' they may enjoy many things in the world, are not so swell'd and puff'd up with them as to value themselves thereupon. But,

2. *THE poor in spirit* are such as are *not covetous in their desire*, nor *penurious in the use*, of worldly things; who use the world as if they us'd it not\*, and live in it so as if they did not live upon it. The nearest to him who is so poor as to *have* nothing, is he who *desires* nothing, and uses *that* he has with *indifference* and *moderation*. This man remembers the advice of holy David, † *If riches encrease, set not your heart upon them*; and the reason given for it by Solomon, ‡ *For riches make themselves wings, they fly away as an eagle toward heaven*. He remembers that a man's life, his safety and happiness, \* *consisteth not in the things which he possesseth*; and therefore (as our Saviour bids him) he *takes heed of*, and avoids *all covetousness*. He † *makes not gold his hope*, nor *rejoices because his wealth is great*, or *that his hand hath gotten much*; but his care is to use it well, to be *rich in good works*, *ready to distribute*, *willing to communicate* to such as want what he enjoys, *laying up in store for himself a good foundation against the time to come*, *that he may lay hold on eternal life*. He sits loose to all the enjoyments of this world, as having laid up his treasure in a better place; he is not grasping in his desires; he is not fond of his possessions; he does not thirst for more than what he has, nor dote upon even *that*: for he considers that the love of the world is the great enemy of religion, and the root of all evil, the mother of falsehood and oppression, variance and contention; whereas if men would be but persuaded to regulate their *desires*, and to be poor in

\* 1 Cor. vii. 31.

† Psalm lxii. 10.

‡ Prov. xxiii. 5.

\* Luke xii. 15.

† Job xxxi. 24, 25.



that respect, the religion of Christ would have opportunity to enter and take possession of their hearts, the government of the world would be easy, and charity would cement and bind all relations, and all societies. It is not necessary that men be *poor*, in order to be *religious*; but it is necessary that they be *not covetous*, that their riches do not get the command of their *hearts*, and they be poor at least in their *designs*, and *desires of*, and their *affections to this world*. This is to be *poor in spirit*, but such a poverty as has annexed to it the truest riches, that of *contentment* and *repose*, the communication of the spirit of Christ, and the rewards of eternal glory.

3. ANOTHER instance in the description and character of the *poor in spirit*, is, that they do thankfully acknowledge the good hand and providence of God in what they enjoy. They look not upon themselves as lords, but stewards; and how great soever their outward circumstances be, their minds are as humble and depending, their hearts as full of gratitude and acknowledgment, as if they liv'd upon the daily alms of heaven, the charity of good men. They consider that God is the great over-ruler and disposer of affairs, that it is in his power to give and to take away, to dispossess the rich and to supply the needy; that they are strangers and pilgrims in this world, have nothing they can truly call their own, because they have every thing they enjoy from God, and not from themselves; and therefore, as the *poor man* when he receives an alms, acknowledges the goodness of the giver, so he who is *poor in spirit* acknowledges the favour and blessing of God even in his riches, and thankfully owns his dependance upon him, even for *his daily bread*. \*The Lord

\* 1 Sam. ii. 7.

*maketh poor and maketh rich, he bringeth low and lifteth up. \* Both riches and honour come of him, he reigneth over all, and in his hand it is to make great and to give strength unto all.*

4. THE fourth and last line in the description of the *poor in spirit*, is, that they are such as have a *readiness and disposition of mind willingly and cheerfully to submit to a condition of poverty, when it shall please God to bring it upon them.* They look upon themselves in the world as all men are apt at some times, *viz.* in wars or great mortalities, when they stand ready for any event, and dispose themselves equally for suffering as for safety. And indeed this state of mind is very necessary for the *disciples of Christ*: for besides the evils and accidents which fall upon them in common with other men, *they* are often called to *higher acts of suffering*, and exposed to it upon the very account of their *religion*. † God tempted *Abraham* with a command of sacrificing his son, that it might appear that pious father of the faithful had a heart disposed sincerely to obey his will, and submit to his providence, tho' with the loss of what was dearest to him in this life. Our Saviour also has declared, † that whosoever does not part with father and mother, wife or children, or any other relation or enjoyment, for his sake and the Gospel, is not worthy to be his follower. Which is not so to be understood as if it were necessary for all his disciples actually to forsake those relations, and to renounce those enjoyments; but to frame their hearts to such an indifferency towards them, that if they must either neglect and omit their duty to him, or suffer the loss of all, they should readily submit to *suffering*; and

\* 1 Chron. xxix. 12.

† Gen. xxii. 1, 2, 12.

‡ Luke xiv. 26.

that as \* *Abraham* went out from his country and his friends, at the command of God, so they should disengage themselves from all the endearments, which, in that state of things, shall prove obstructions to their duty and their religion. † *Who-soever* (says our Saviour) *will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.* Now as poverty is one great instance of the cross, and submitting cheerfully to it, as to the will of God, a great degree of *self-denial*, we must not, when it falls in our way, be offended at it; but endeavour continually to prepare our minds for it, and set our selves to acquire that holy strength and fortitude which may enable us to bear it, when God shall think fit to lay that cross upon our shoulders. Men generally addict themselves with so much eagerness to the gratifying their humour and their delight, that when it comes to the point of *self-denial* and *forsaking*, they are all disorder'd and passionate, look upon it as unreasonable and intolerable; they murmur at providence, and ‡ *charge God foolishly*, and too often chuse with *Demas* to forsake *St. Paul*, their Duty and their Saviour, than this present world: whereas if they were *poor in spirit*, in the sense here mention'd, they would make a wiser choice: if they had before wrought themselves (as they should do) to a readiness and disposition to bear the cross, they would find the weight much lessen'd when it should be laid upon them, and say with holy *Job*, \* *Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither; the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.*

\* Heb. xi. 8.

† Mark viii. 34.

‡ Job i. 22.

\* Job i. 21.

II. HAVING thus described who are the poor in spirit, let us next enquire into the *kingdom of heaven*, which is the blessing entail'd upon them. And *this* enquiry will divide it self into two branches.

1. WHAT we are to understand by the *kingdom of heaven*.

2. WHY that portion is assign'd to the *poor in spirit*.

1. WHAT we are to understand by the kingdom of heaven. And for satisfaction to this point we are to consider,

(1.) THAT in the writings of the Evangelists it is plainly and frequently us'd for the *coming of Christ into the world*, for the *state of grace*, and the *preaching of the Gospel*; as you may observe from that of the Baptist, \* *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*. And in the 13th chapter of St. Matthew; our Saviour delivers many parables, which must of necessity refer to this sense of the kingdom of heaven; as that of the † *grain of mustard-seed* thrown into the earth, which, tho' it be a small seed of itself, does yield a very surprising and plentiful encrease; of † *heaven*, which was put into three measures of meal, and it leaven'd the whole lump; of a \* *net* cast into the sea, which brought up in it every kind of fish, &c. All which do properly relate to the *great progress of the Gospel* from poor and mean beginnings, and serv'd then to animate his disciples in the pursuit of their duty, in that preaching of the christian faith which should be crowned with such wonderful success. But then,

(2.) BY the kingdom of heaven is also understood the *state of glory and happiness in the world*

\* Matth. iii. 2.

† Matth. xiii 31.

‡ Ibid. ver. 33.

\* Ibid. ver. 47.

to come, the rewards and mansions prepared by Christ for such as believe in him and obey him. And thus it is usually expounded in that saying of his, *\*Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.* And more plainly in this other, *† Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven.*

HAVING thus briefly stated the question, what we are to understand by the kingdom of heaven; we must enquire in the next place,

2. WHY this belongs so properly and peculiarly to the poor in spirit. *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* Theirs it is in both senses, both the state of grace, and the state of glory, to them belongs the preaching of the Gospel, and the rewards of it.

THAT they have a special interest and property in the state and revelation of the Gospel, will appear upon these two accounts.

(1.) BECAUSE the disposition of their minds is such, that they are immediately capable of receiving and entertaining all the precepts of the christian doctrine; their hearts are as it were plow'd up, and ready for the seed, the greatest obstacle, *viz. the world and their affections to it,* being already conquered. The rule and riches of the world did, at our Saviour's coming, and do still produce in men, a backwardness to the self-denying principles and discipline of his religion; and therefore says he, *‡ 'Tis easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.* By the kingdom of God is understood there the state of the

\* Matth. v. 20.

† Matth. vii. 21.

‡ Matth. xix. 24.

Gospel, according to the former sense; and by a *rich man*, one with all the usual pride and appetites, the prejudices and corrupt affections of rich men, who in such a state are by no means capable of being members of this kingdom. But the poor in spirit, who are come to a better temper, have broke through these impediments; abundance to them is in a manner the same thing as want, they use the world as if they used it not; and therefore the passions and interests of this world have lost their force upon them, can neither blind their minds, nor bend their wills against the law of Christ, by setting up themselves in competition with it. The *poor in spirit*, let his condition and substance be what it will, has no uncomplying prejudices to byass him, but receives the Gospel heartily and freely, without design or hypocrisy, and is prepared to embrace all the commands of his Saviour, and to run through all the methods of a spiritual life. Consider him in the *first* great line of this description, as an *humble and lowly* man, setting little value upon himself: does not this particularly qualify him for a christian modesty in all his conversation; a christian obedience to his governors, a christian meekness towards all men, a christian condescension to the infirmities of his neighbours, and to any charitable and friendly offices for their good; a christian pity towards the afflicted, justice and equity in all his dealings, patience under all reproaches, averseness to all faction and tumult, and readiness to forgive all injuries; to love his enemies, and return good for evil, which are the distinguishing characters of the religion of Christ? Consider him under the *second* head, as one who is neither *covetous* in the desire of more, nor *penurious* in the use of what he has; and does not this peculiarly dispose him to that absolute contentment with his condition, whatever it is, which

which Christianity requires of him? and make him peculiarly averſe to all the vile arts of violence and oppreſſion, fraud and cheating, diſſimulation, flattery and lying for advantage, which the ſame Christianity forbids him; does it not prepare him for that generoſis open-handed liberality to the poor, and that good-natur'd hoſpitality to his neighbours, enjoin'd him by the chriſtian Goſpel? And if we conſider him in the *third* branch of his character, as *thankfully owning his dependance upon God*, for all he enjoys; does it not prepare his mind for thoſe exalted acts of piety and devotion, love and gratitude to the great God who made him, the bleſſed Saviour who redeem'd him, and the holy Spirit who ſanctifies him, which our holy religion calls upon him for? and is not ſuch a gratitude the beſt, the ſtrongest and moſt natural principle of that ſincere and univerſal obedience which is requir'd of every Chriſtian? Look upon him under the *fourth* qualification, as one who is ready to *part with* all he enjoys whenever God ſhall call for it by his providence; and particularly to ſuffer the loſs of all things to promote the glory of God, and to preſerve the integrity of a good conſcience: and does not all this answer to that truſt and faith in God, that firm reliance upon him, that dutiful and meek ſubmiſſion to him, that heavenly-mindedneſs and indifference to the things of this world, that fervent zeal for God's honour, and cloſe adherence to the religion of Chriſt, which our Chriſtianity ſo much inſiſts upon? And does it not eſpecially fortify us for that ſelf-denial which is the life and ſpirit of a Chriſtian, and for all thoſe hardships and ſufferings from a wicked world, which Chriſt and his Apoſtles teſtify to be the lot of all who will in earneſt cleave to him? And thus I think it is evident, that ſuch a poverty of ſpirit as has been deſcribed, directly and neceſſarily qualifies

lives men for embracing the christian religion, and therefore the kingdom of heaven may be properly said to be theirs in the *first* sense. But,

(2.) It is so again in the same sense of the phrase, as this poverty in spirit not only disposes for all other parts of our religion, but is it self one of the special and peculiar virtues of the Gospel. Theirs is the kingdom of heaven, because they are gone a great way in it, and possess one of the brightest ornaments and beauties of it. Upon which account it is that our Saviour so frequently and importunately recommends this virtue to his followers; and therefore at one time setting a child before them, affirms,\* that if ever they enter into the kingdom of God, they must be like such a one, which is as much as to say, that the kingdom of God consists chiefly in the exercise of this grace; for the main lines and features of it are very lively represented in infants, who are so happy in their ignorance of, and little interests in the world, that they may be truly said to be *poor in spirit*. And at another time he presses them to it by his own example, † *I am among you*, says he, *as one that serveth*. And again, ‡ *Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls*. By these and several other passages he discovers the high esteem and importance of this virtue, and the great ornament and beauty of it. || *Of such*, says he, *is the kingdom of heaven*: the state of the Gospel is made up chiefly of the poor in spirit, they are more eminently his disciples, they bear his own badge and cognizance, the very spirit with which he came into the world, and all along

\* Matth. xviii. 3, 4. † Luke xxii. 27. ‡ Matth. xi. 29.  
|| Matth. xix. 14.



convers'd in it. And therefore upon this account also the poor in spirit have a particular interest and property in the kingdom of heaven.

THUS then it is you see in the first sense of this kingdom; and so it is in the *second*, when we take it for the glory and happiness of the world to come. For,

(1.) THE state of grace is but the beginning and infancy of the state of glory, and that of glory is but the state of grace in its full perfection, strength and beauty. So that if the poor in spirit have a particular property in the one, they have it also in the other; if they have it in the preaching and practice of the Gospel, they have it also in the rewards. But then,

(2.) CHRIST has that special regard to this excellence, that he rewards it not only in the gross with others, but particularly and by it self. To humility is always assign'd throughout the Scriptures the distinguishing reward of *exaltation*. \* *He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and hath exalted the humble and meek.* † *He that humbleth himself shall be exalted.* ‡ *And humble your selves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.* Still exaltation is the peculiar recompence of this grace, and that, as I suppose, with an eye to the *next* life, rather than to *this*; for though the providence of God does sometimes remarkably bring it about in this present world, that the poor in spirit are preferred and honoured, yet it is often otherwise; and indeed if it were only *here*, the recompence would be but little, *for the things that are seen are temporal*, short-lived and transitory, but the things that

\* Luke i. 52. Psalm clxvii. 6. † Luke xiv. 11.

‡ 1 Pet. v. 6.

are not seen are eternal, a reward well worthy the hopes and enjoyment of a Christian. And therefore whether they see the accomplishment of the promise here or not, they shall certainly enjoy it in the world to come, where it will be of most happiness and advantage to them: For God has blessed them, and they shall be blessed.



## C H A P. II.

## Of MOURNING.

MATTH. V. 4.

*Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.*



IN the close of the foregoing chapter, discoursing upon the first of these Beatitudes, it was shewn, that exaltation is the special recompence assign'd to *humility*, or *poverty in spirit*; now in this second, *comfort* is the peculiar blessing promis'd to the *mourner*. We cannot but observe from hence, that the all-wise and merciful God not only delights to bless his creatures, but contrives, as it were, to do it *in the most proper and obliging manner*; to adapt his *rewards* to the nature of our *virtues*, and suit his *benefits* to our  *necessities*: for what can be a more acceptable blessing to the *mourner*

*mourner than comfort?* What can be a more suitable reward to *humility* than *exaltation*?

YET that we may not deceive our selves, in applying those general words in the text to *all* sorts of grief and sorrow, without any difference or restraint; let us,

FIRST, Enquire what our Saviour could be supposed to mean by *mourning*. For if we take it in the full extent of nature, and in the compass of an human passion, that is, as it is describ'd in general, a trouble or disturbance of the soul occasion'd by any present evil, it may be so ill manag'd as to become *irregular* and *sinful*, and to deserve *punishment* from God, rather than expect a  *blessing*: and therefore we cannot understand it here in such a latitude. But as all the other qualifications or circumstances bless'd by our Saviour in this sermon are apparently either excellent graces and ornaments of the *christian religion*, or have an immediate reference to it, and have the blessing annexed to them *as such*, we must consider the mourning here bless'd, as only taking in what is honourable and useful in it to *religion*, and bounded within the proper limits which are allowable by *the laws of Christ*, and qualify'd every other way as *they* prescribe.

ACCORDINGLY, the *mourners* to whom our Lord has promis'd *comfort* in this text, are such as mourn in a *religious manner*, or, as St. Paul's expression is, \* *after a godly sort*, so as that it may appear to be more the issue of regeneration than nature, or at least to be under the government and regulation of christian principles. And that it may be so, their mourning must be (1.) sincere and real; (2.) it must be religiously employ'd, and upon spiritual objects; or, (3.) if the occasion of it be purely

\* 2 Cor. vii. 11.

*temporal*, the troubles and sufferings only of this world, it must be moderated and govern'd by the *rules of religion*.

*FIRST* then it must be *sincere* and *real*, proceeding from the *heart*, and not from any of those little arts of disguise and affectation, which are so commonly used to deceive our selves and others, and with which men foolishly imagine (or seem at least to do so) that they can deceive God too. For grief is represented by such expressions in holy Scripture, as do necessarily suppose it has its proper seat and principle within. So the *Psalmist*, \* *My heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels*. And again, † *My heart is wounded within me, my soul is sore vexed*. † *Jeremiah* also, that true mourner, † *My bowels are troubled for Ephraim; I am in distress, my bowels are troubled, and my heart is turned within me; for I have grievously rebelled, &c.* If we be not thus *in earnest* in our grief, 'tis all to no purpose, be the object what it will; all the sad postures of the body (without this inward sorrow) are no more acceptable to God, than the hanging down of a flower upon its stalk when it is over-pressed with dew. But as indeed when our own worldly crosses give us the affliction, it is not to be doubted but our concern is real, we do not use to be Hypocrites in sorrow upon such an occasion; the only danger which makes this caution of *sincerity* needful, is in the case of *spiritual* grief, and *repentance* towards God, or the concern we ought to shew for the *sins* or the *calamities* of others. And yet as to this last, a *compassionate temper* is so natural, so much more easy than a *penitent sorrow* for our own sins, or a *religious grief* of mind for sins committed by other people, that here I must

\* Psal. xxii. 16.

† Psal. cix. 22.

‡ Jer. xxxi. 20.

Lam. i. 20. ——— ii. 11.

lay the chief stress of my argument, and press sincerity with the greatest earnestness. 'Tis here, in the case of repentance, that we are most apt to impose upon our selves, and upon those about us, with a remorse or sorrow, which, though it is more than is usual with us, is not effectually what it should be. It was a sad complaint which God made of his own people the *Jews*, that *\*they drew near to him with their mouths, and honoured him with their lips, †bowed down their heads as a bulrush, and spread sackcloth and ashes under them,* gave him good words and pretended to be mighty penitent, when nevertheless *their HEARTS were far from him*. And doubtless the complaint may justly be renew'd of too many, who, not being always able to resist their consciences, are stung sometimes with a remorse, pretend a sorrow for their sins, and a great sense and trouble for what they have done amiss, confess it, and condemn themselves for it; and yet 'tis such a kind of sorrow as too evidently consists with the love and liking of the sin, which they again embrace at the return of the next temptation; that is, it is a false and hypocritical sorrow: though perhaps themselves may think it inward and real enough in the design, it proves not so in the event; for nothing can be sincere repentance but that which not only *laments sin past*, but also teaches us a perfect hatred, and a careful avoidance of it for the time to come. In the trial of our religious sorrow therefore, let us enquire how our souls and consciences are affected. Do we offer to God (not a few faint wishes or dissembled tears, but) *‡the sacrifice of a broken spirit, and a contrite heart*? Do we consider our sins when we confess them? and are our souls affected, our hearts and resolutions bent against them

\* Isa. xxix. 13.

\* Isa. lviii. 5.

‡ Psal. li. 17.

when we say we bewail them? If so, we shall enjoy the comfort promised in the text, and not otherwise: for let us not deceive our selves, \* *God is not to be mocked or imposed upon.* † *The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked: But the Lord searcheth the heart, and trieth the reins, neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do.* The same is to be apply'd to the concern we shew for the sins of others; it must be deep and real, proceeding not from a slight formality, or affectation of appearing better than other men, much less from a spirit of pride and censoriousness; there must be nothing of the *Pharisee* in it, but it must be the issue of a well rooted love of God, and zeal for his honour, and hearty detestation of all sins, and an affectionate charity to the souls of men, if ever we expect our mourning upon this occasion should be blessed with comfort.

I will now proceed to the *second* limitation of mourning in the sense of this text. It must be *religiously employ'd*, and upon *spiritual objects*. We are not to make our selves uneasy for the want of riches, or honours, or other *worldly* enjoyments, but for those wants which affect our better and immortal part, our *souls*. We are not to throw away our grief upon what our selves or any body else has done against our secular interest; but what displeases God, obstructs us in our way to heaven, and darkens our eternal hopes.

To state more particularly the proper objects of that mourning which is indeed religious, we will consider them in these following heads.

\* Gal. vi. 7.

† Jer. xvii. 9, 10.

Heb. iv. 13.

1. THE first is the *want* of that *unsinning purity and righteousness* wherewith the first man *Adam* was adorn'd in paradise; and in which all after-generations had been born, if he by his disobedience had not forfeited and lost it. It is a great aggravation of the unhappiness of mankind, that they did once bear a better and more glorious character, the image and superscription of God himself, and such a perfection of being as that they might look up to their Creator with an holy joy and confidence, and look into themselves with that peace and satisfaction of mind which is the effect of innocence, when sin was not yet enter'd into the world, nor misery and death by sin, but God and man were in perfect good agreement, and it was as natural to *obey and love* our Maker, as it is now to *offend and dread* him. But alas! that crown is fallen from our heads, those robes of original purity and righteousness were torn to pieces by that careless and unhappy couple from whose loins we all descend. Evident it is that we carry about us the seeds and principles of sin and disobedience, which improv'd by our malicious enemy the Devil, and fed by ill examples in the world, are daily breaking out into rebellion against God; and these *\* have separated between our God and us*, and have set him at an angry distance from us, as the sense of guilt has made us also *afraid*, and the love of sin *unwilling* to approach him. The consideration of this should be a perpetual spring of tears and sorrow, and that not only upon our own accounts, but in behalf of *all mankind*, who are expos'd in the same nakedness and dishonour.

2. ANOTHER thing which enters deep into the heart of a religious mourner is a consequence of the last, namely, the *want of power and sufficiency*.

\* Isai. lix. 2.

(even in the best of men) as to any strength of their own, to come up to those *more moderate terms* which God has now establish'd in his Son Jesus Christ, for our *recovery*; and those are faith, repentance, and amendment, to be heartily sorry for our offences past, to implore and hope for pardon through the alone merits of our Saviour's sacrifice, and to govern our selves for the future by the law of God. But though these terms are so merciful and easy in the nature and the reason of them, yet our old corruption still so clogs us, the world has so long usurp'd upon our affections, our secular interests and our passions do so often blind us, and a course of sinning so fatally tend to harden us, that it is not without great difficulty and many sad interruptions, that *we can apply our selves* to believe, repent, and change our evil customs for a life of virtue and obedience, nor without the assistance of God's powerful grace that we can at length *perform* this. And because there is such a defect of power in men to do these things as they ought to be done, the religious mourner reflects upon himself with sorrow, and his heart is troubled within him. He sees the excellency and reasonableness of the law of God; that a constant uniform obedience to it is his truest interest as well as duty, his greatest honour and perfection, and his utmost happiness; but he finds, by sad experience, that *\* in our flesh dwells no good thing*. Our *understandings* are short and defective in the things of God, involved in prejudices and mistakes; our *wills* are byas'd and perverted to evil by habit and inclination, or chain'd down from good by that agonish littleness which hangs upon them in such matters; our *memories* are not only weak, retaining the images of evil, and the notion of worldly things, and

\* Rom. vii. 18.



the arts of gain and profit, but are very faithless and unheeding of the treasures of divine wisdom and knowledge, the precepts of God's law by which our lives are to be govern'd, and the repeated benefits and blessings of God, by which he daily encourages us to obedience. God requires us to love him with all our soul and with all our strength; but alas! how hard it is not to love the world and our selves above him! so much do *our senses* and the charms of outward things debauch us. He has placed our consciences as a guard to keep us to our duty, and admonish and accuse us when we do amiss; but either, like *Saul* upon the mountains, they are asleep with the spear stuck by them; or else, like *Lazarus* at the gates of the rich man, their cries and clamours are not heard, for the noise of the rude appetites and desires within. And is not all this just matter for sorrow and sad thoughts?

3. A third thing which gives him cause of mourning, is the effect of this corruption, in so many publick instances. For from hence it is, from the general prevalence of weak understandings and unruly passions, that in all ages there have risen up errors and heresies, to pervert the truth, and break the peace and order of the Church, and stir up difference and dissention; which by degrees has brought men to place almost their whole religion in the practice of what is most condemn'd by it, \* *bitter envying and strife*, the chusing little sides and parties, adhering to them with a zeal inflam'd to faction, and pursuing with a fierce and furious heat all such as differ from them: a temper, which (if we will believe the Apostle) *descends not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish*, and unworthy of the christian name. If therefore we would learn

\* Jam. iii. 14, 15.

a just and acceptable argument for mourning, let *this*, amongst others, sink deep into our hearts, that the Church of Christ is a broken and disunited body, the \* *peculiar people* whom *he purchased to himself to be zealous in good works*, is become zealous only for particular parties and opinions, (and those sometimes of little consequence, not worth contending for;) while that *peace and charity* our Saviour left behind him as a distinguishing mark of his disciples is now hardly visible, that one would think there were no such thing as a body of Christians in the world.

4. THE fourth cause of mourning and sorrow to a religious mind is *sin*; and this may be consider'd under a double character; either the sins of *common infirmity*, which the best men are too often guilty of; or wilful sins, and great apostacies from God and goodness, which strike at the very life and being of religion. I call those *sins of infirmity*, which proceed from the weakness and imperfection of our graces, supposing nevertheless the sincere devotion of our *wills* to God, and a *general* watchfulness (though not so strict and constant as it should be) against offending. And I call those wilful sins and apostacies from God and goodness, which proceed from the *strength and uncontrolled dominion of sin in our hearts*, and that *willing* slavery and subjection which too many are under to it by sinful habits, and *indulging* themselves in practices contrary to the law of God. Now *first*, as to *sins of infirmity*; the weakness of our faith, the coldness of our love to God, and of our zeal for his honour and glory; our backwardness to spiritual duties, our wretched wandrings and distractions in them, our too great fondness for the world, and the business or enjoyments of it; our impatience under sufferings and

\* Tit. ii. 14.

contradiction, and the first (though never so little) giving way to blasphemous, murmuring, lustful, ambitious, or other sinful thoughts, and many other the like to these, which through the yet unconquer'd force, perhaps of custom, or education, or prejudice, through ignorance or want of consideration, through idleness or business, or some other accident which throws us off our guard, the best men are frequently betray'd into, against the general purpose of their minds — they are certainly fit objects of sorrow and sad reflection in us all. For regeneration does not immediately purge us from all the corruptions of that unhappy nature we were born with, but only works in us a settled practical dislike of sin, and love of holiness and virtue; yet so as the remains of natural corruption are still left to be *thorns in our sides, and pricks in our eyes*, to humble us before God, and keep us in the daily practice of repentance, that we may *\*work out our salvation with fear and trembling*. The religious mourner therefore, considering the excellency of God, and the infinite reason there is to believe and trust in him, to love, and serve, and worship him, with the utmost zeal and application, cannot but be deeply concern'd when he reflects upon his own unworthy coldness and deficiency in any of these. He considers the law of God as a perfect rule of life, a fair and exact copy set him, and by the authority of a master whom he has the highest obligations to obey: it is his earnest desire to live up to this rule, to write exactly after this copy; and when he observes how far he falls short of it, how often he offends, and that every offence (though it be through weakness or infirmity) is still a deviation from the law of God, he cannot but lay it seriously to heart. He is sensible that

\* Phil. ii. 12.

these sins, however inconsiderable other men may think them, darken his prospect of a better life, increase the particulars of the account he is to make to God, and give the Devil fresh matter of accusation against him, and fresh encouragements and advantages farther to attack him, he cannot but look upon himself with grief and mourning; and though he cannot number them in his confessions, he will yet confess them in their numbers, with a *general* (but a *true* and *deep*) repentance.

As to *wilful sins*, or sins of great apostacy from God and goodness; such as blasphemy, prophane cursing and swearing, drunkenness, lewdness, contempt of God, or ridiculing religion and good men, oppression, injustice, murder, lying, cheating, and such other horrid and notorious miscarriages as are inconsistent with the life and being of Christianity, without as great and severe a repentance, I need not surely prove that *these* are objects of religious sorrow: for if we grieve not for them, and very deeply too, 'tis at our utmost peril; we can hope for no pardon, and peace, and reconciliation with God, no happiness and glory, nor any thing but eternal torments in the life to come. But then, to both these there may be added that which is very becoming a christian spirit to consider; and that is, *mourning for the sins of others*. For understanding the Church to be a society of persons, engaged upon the same accounts *to be holy in all manner of conversation*, and expecting the same rewards for their obedience, and exposed to the same *terrors of the Lord* for disobedience unrepented of; it is but reasonable that where any appear to fall short of their duty, and consequently of the reward, the whole body should have a fellow-feeling of it, and be concern'd in pure compassion and good nature for it. The *Psalmist* says  
of

of himself, that *\* rivers of waters ran down his eyes because men kept not God's laws.* Our Saviour and his Apostles were troubled at the unbelief of obstinate hearers. And farther to shew how acceptable this practice is to God, let me recommend to your consideration what the Lord said in the vision of *Ezekiel, † Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.* And indeed religion, as well as humanity, requires this of us; for we should look upon sin (whether in our selves or others) as a dishonour to Christ and Christianity; should grieve for it (wherever we find it) as the violation of an holy and excellent law, and the stains and blemish of that body which Christ ‡ *is to present holy and blameless unto God.*

I come now to the *third* limitation of mourning in my text, to make it religious, and entitle it to a blessing, which is, that though the occasion of it be purely *temporal*, the troubles and sufferings we meet with in the affairs of common life, it must be *moderated* and govern'd by the *rules of religion.* Christianity pretends not (like the vain and pompous doctrine of the *Stoicks*) to forbid us an human sense of evils, to root out of us *all concern*, and tie us down to perfect *indifference*, with respect to pain or poverty, reproach or loss of friends, or damage in our estates, or any other calamities incident to us in this uncertain world, but teaches us to bear with moderation, and improve them well. For natural passions are not in themselves sinful; but

\* Psal. cxix. 136.  
Eph. v. 27.

† Ezek. ix. 4.

‡ Col. i. 22.

they

they must be kept under *proper qualifications and measures*, to render them decent and allowable in a Christian. And,

1. THE mourning of a Christian in the case of suffering, must be *calm* and moderate, not flying out into ranting expostulations, storms and fury. 'Tis a vanity in most sufferers, (proceeding from an over-great fondness of themselves) that they suppose their sufferings greater than they are, and are apt to imagine that no body's case is so hard and grievous as their own; and this is the excuse they make for their impatience under sufferings: whereas the truth is, they are weak and peevish, and have not obtain'd that mastery over their passions which reason and religion, well attended to, would give them. And this assuredly makes their yoke the heavier: for experience shews that things are easy or troublesome, according to the measure of strength and power which they have who endure them.

2. THIS mourning should not sour them into *hard thoughts of God, or murmuring against him*. For \* *he will not lay upon man more than is right, that he should enter into judgment with God*. The blessings we enjoy are not bestow'd upon us for any merit of ours, but are the pure effects of his bounty, the gift of his providence, and there is no wrong done if he take away the blessing which he gave, and which perhaps we have abused, or been unthankful for: for shall he not do what he will with his own? And if he lays affliction upon us, yet as he is our Sovereign Lord, we ought not to dispute it with him. † *Who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?* The christian sufferer therefore tempers his sorrow with a due

\* Job xxxiv. 23.

† Rom. ix. 20.

submission to the will of God, and follows the example of his Saviour, when he pray'd, *\* If it be possible let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt:* and when he check'd his forward Disciple for attempting to rescue him from the Jews, with this, *† the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?*

3. THIS mourning or sense of grief for our afflictions, ought never to go so far as to put us upon *unlawful* or *unwarrantable* methods to get free from them. Honest endeavours we may use, for Christianity allows them: but in the use of these we must rest contented, and with patience and submission wait for their success from God, or for deliverance otherwise by his hand, not giving way to the least thought of violent, dishonest, or unworthy measures.

It will be proper here to add, that not only the calamities which befall *our selves*, or those of our own family and relations, which have an immediate interest in our concern, but the sufferings of *others* also, may and ought to be lamented by us. The common ties of humanity oblige to this, and Christianity is not wanting to confirm whatever is generous and good in human nature. *|| Remember them in bonds as bound with them, and them which suffer adversity, as being your selves also in the body,* liable to the same misfortunes which they suffer. By this text we see that mourning for the afflictions of others is prescrib'd by our religion, and therefore falls within the character of that sorrow which has the promise of comfort from our Saviour.

\* Matth. xxvi. 39.

† John xviii. 11.

|| Heb. xiii. 3.

II. WE come now, *secondly*, to consider the blessing, that comfort promis'd to the religious mourner. In doing which we will run through the several objects of christian sorrow propos'd before, and see what comfort is provided for us by Christ in every of those instances.

(1.) As to the loss or want of that *unfinning purity and righteousness* which *Adam* had, the distance this has bred between God and us, and the fears and backwardness in us to approach him, arising from a sense of his most perfect holiness, and of our own depravity and guilt; Christ has provided comfort for us.

1. As he himself has in some measure repaired the disgrace of our nature, by *becoming man* (the second *Adam*, as he is call'd,) and in that nature fulfilling all righteousness and the whole will of God, with an unfinning innocence. It is some comfort to a man, that though he cannot in *his own person* attain to any great estate or quality in the world, yet some of his family and relations have, his blood is ennobled by the honour it enjoys in them, their wealth is both a credit and a relief to him. And thus, though *we* indeed are miserably defective in righteousness, decayed and fallen from the innocence our nature once enjoy'd, into a wretched state of corruption and depravity; there is one of our own line we still may boast of, a man like our selves, the man \**Christ Jesus*, who is entirely free from all taint of sin.

2. EVEN we our selves, if we take care to live so as the † Gospel has prescribed to us, shall, when we come to heaven, be also perfectly purify'd from all that corruption which we now lament, and be for ever restor'd to that unfinning purity we long for. And,

\* 2 Cor. v. 21.

† 2 Pet. i. 4. 1 John iii. 2.



3. CHRIST as our Mediator has made up the breach between God and us. \* *In him we have boldness and access with confidence*; are freed from † *the spirit of bondage, and have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.* We have ‡ *boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus*, and therefore may draw near to God, in full assurance of faith, without those servile fears and trembling, which are the effects of our original guilt, if we come but with a true heart, a sincere and honest mind.

AND all these, though I shall not here enlarge upon them, are surely very full and very proper comforts, with respect to that first object of religious mourning.

(2.) THE second, which was the want of power and sufficiency in our selves *to come up to the terms of the new covenant in Christ Jesus, to believe, repent, and obey the law of God for the future*, has also that which may be a suitable comfort in this following consideration; that Christ by the merit of his sufferings, has obtained for us the assistance of divine grace, the gift of the holy Spirit of God to help our infirmities; by which Spirit we are ¶ *strengthened with might in the inner man*; we are regenerated and born anew, with new principles and seeds of life, with fresh powers and faculties for the service of God; so that though we be weak in our selves, through him we may be \* *able to do all things*: his grace is sufficient for us, his strength is made perfect in our weakness. And that which is particularly observable to this purpose, is, that this holy Spirit of God is promised by Christ under the express term of a † *Comforter*.

\* Eph. iii. 12. † Rom. viii. 15. ‡ Heb. x. 19, 22.  
 ¶ Rom. viii. 26. Eph. iii. 16. \* Phil. iv. 13. 2 Cor.  
 xii. 9. † John xiv. 16, 17.

(3.) As to the *third*, the publick divisions and breach of charity, the heats and factions that prevail so lamentably in the Church of God, we have this to comfort us, that though even some good men may disagree with too much warmth and passion, in their opinions here, the Church triumphant in heaven (and they when they come to be members of it there) shall be in perfect peace, and love, and unity; and as our understandings shall be then enlarged, our charity shall be so too. And as to the disturbance of the Church in general, by such divisions in this present state of things, we may be the better satisfy'd by this, that God knows how to bring good out of evil, and first or last he will be glorify'd in all.

(4.) A *fourth* occasion of religious sorrow are our *sins of infirmity*; but as to these, it is undoubtedly a great and sufficient comfort to consider, that where they are sincerely disallow'd and strove against, they shall not be imputed to us to our condemnation. For Christ has obtained for us, not only the gift of the holy Spirit to assist us in our christian warfare, but the acceptance also of what that holy Spirit works in us, though it be not so compleat in this life as it shall be in the next. We are called indeed to *\*perfection in holiness* and in *every good work*, but we fall short of it, in numberless instances; we are liable to many weaknesses and disorders, to many escapes and errors; and if all these were to be remember'd against us, we could hope for no deliverance from the wrath of God; if he were strict to *†mark iniquities who could stand?* but there is mercy with him that he may be feared. *‡He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax.* He will accept of honest and sincere endeavours, and where we *unwillingly* fall short

\* Matth. v. 48.

† Psal. cxxx. 3, 4.

‡ Isai. xlii. 3.

of perfection, our surety shall make it up in our accounts with God.

(§.) IN the *fifth* case, that of *wilful, gross, and heinous sins*, our comfort is, that even *these* shall be forgiven upon a true repentance and amendment. \* *When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive; † Though his sins be as scarlet they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.* And these comfortable promises are purchas'd for us by Christ, † *who came into the world to save even the chief of sinners*, and thro' the merit of his sufferings and death has procur'd a pardon for them. 'Tis true, the obstinate and harden'd sinner can expect no comfort, the Gospel of Christ designs him none, but the repenting sinner may; and what more proper comfort can he have, than the assurance of being receiv'd to mercy? But this is not all the encouragement and support he has under the discipline of a severe repentance; for through the power of Christ working in him, by his holy Spirit implanting new principles, and an opposite inclination to that of sin, (which is at large discours'd of by St. Paul, in his sixth chapter to the Romans,) \* *the body of sin shall be destroyed*, the iron scepter of that tyrant broke, it shall no longer *have dominion over him*, except he tamely and voluntarily submit himself to a second slavery under it. It will be solely his own fault if sin have any empire or command within; for grace sufficient is promised him (if he will faithfully use it) to preserve his freedom. And surely a just sense of this must needs inspire him with exceeding joy and comfort.

\* Ezek. xviii. 27.

† Isai. i. 18.

‡ 1 Tim. i. 15.

\* Rom. vi.

(6.) THE next occasion of grief to a religious mourner, was the *sins of others*; and in this case also, comfort is provided for him. For as there are many wicked men about us who dishonour God, and break his laws in a very insolent and provoking manner; so, on the other hand, there are some good ones, who are as the salt of the earth, to preserve it from a total corruption. Had *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah* enjoy'd but ten such righteous Persons as just \* *Lot* within their walls, *who dwelling there*, mourned for their iniquities, and † *vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds*, the flames from heaven had not consumed them, but they might have stood, perhaps, and flourished to this hour. It is some farther comfort too, that notwithstanding *vice* prevails so generally in point of practice, yet virtue has not lost its reputation, even with wicked men themselves; who cannot but *commend* and *secretly approve* the good and virtuous, the just, the merciful, the meek, the sober man. Another satisfaction the religious mourner has, (and 'tis a very great one) the testimony of his own good conscience, bearing witness within him of the work and power of God's grace, which has enclined him to such an abhorrence and detestation of sin, that he is not able to look upon it in others without grief and trouble: for this shews his love of God to be sincere and generous, his sense of religion rooted in his judgment and affections, as well as interest, and that he hates *sin as sin* wherever he finds it; and all this is a happy argument to him of *his own Integrity*.

(7.) MUCH might be said upon the last head of temporal sufferings, either as they affect our selves, or other men; but I shall contract it into as little

\* Gen. xviii. 32.

† 2 Pet. ii. 8.

room as may be; premising only this, that in *both these cases* the same considerations will be a support and comfort to us.

1. THEN let the suffering be what it will, we are to consider God as infinitely wise and good, and *ordering all things for the best*. The sufferings of this world are many times not so much a punishment, as a charitable design to us, to draw us off \* from sin, and bring us to repentance, † to humble us, to wean us ‡ from the world, to try our faith and trust || in God, to improve us in all virtue and obedience † to him, and to forward our own real advantage at length, though we do not see at present into the secret springs of Providence, by which it may be brought about; as in the case of *∴ Joseph*, and many other instances, \* *for all things work together for good, to them that love God*; and therefore though the religious mourner † *sows in tears*, 'tis with a confidence that *he shall reap in joy*. But,

2. SUPPOSE it be by way of punishment we suffer, it is to be remember'd, by way of comfort, that this correction is to make us wiser and better, † and to prevent the eternal punishment in hell. And 'tis to be considered also, that whatsoever we may suffer here, 'tis || *less than our iniquities deserve*. We may be thankful that our lives are left us, thankful for any suffering on this side death and eternity. † *Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?*

3. LASTLY, The religious mourner ought to restrain his sorrow, by the hope and expectation of a future state. That one reflection of St.

\* Job xxxvi. 8, 9, 10.

† 2 Cor. xii. 7.

‡ 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.

|| Jam. i. 2, 3.

† Psal. cxix. 71.

∴ Gen. i. 20, 21.

\* Rom. viii. 28.

† Psal. cxxvi. 5.

† Heb. xii. 9, 10, 11.

|| Ezra ix. 13.

† Lam. iii. 39.

*Paul's, that \* the sufferings of this present life are not worthy, to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us, is capable of working in a considerate mind, more joy and satisfaction, than all the pressures of the world can trouble and torment us. To a man who stedfastly believes the immortality of his soul, and the eternal glory of the world to come, no other argument need be urged for comfort in the midst of all his afflictions. In the revelation of this, and the assurance of it upon such conditions as the Gospel tenders it, Christ has done more to comfort us, than all the malice of earth and hell can do to grieve us. With these words therefore, viz. These promises, this revelation, comfort your selves and one another; and state but the case aright betwixt eternity and threescore years, or say it be somewhat more, and you will find in all reason that the future world should weigh down the present. And thus we have done with the second of the Beatitudes, *Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.**

\* Rom. viii. 18.





## C H A P. III.

## Of MEEKNESS.

MATTH. V. 5.

*Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.*



IN discoursing upon this text, the most easy and natural method will be that which we have taken in the two former chapters,

*FIRST*, To describe the virtue, and consequently the persons blessed; and,

*SECONDLY*, To explain the promise made to it and them, or in other words, to consider and apply the blessing.

*FIRST*, To describe *the virtue, meekness*; and consequently the persons blessed under that character. Meekness may be described in general, to be that quietness and gentleness of mind which issues not from any weakness of the faculties, or merely from a calm constitution of blood and spirits, but from the strength of prudence, and the power of religion. It is a great mistake in many people, who judge themselves possess'd of meekness *as a virtue*, when it is no more than the result  
of

of an undiscerning or inconsiderate mind, not capable of being affected with passion, for want of judgment to apprehend the nature of things. Such persons are not properly *meek*, but thoughtless and insensible. Others fall into the like mistake, by presuming upon the mildness and softness of their natural tempers, and these are also not properly to be accounted meek (in the sense of this text) because it proceeds from *constitution*, not from *principle*, but the right character of them is *tender* and *good-natured*. Yet this last I freely own to be a valuable endowment, and such a mind is certainly the most apt and fruitful soil for receiving and improving the seeds of this virtue, *christian meekness*.

BUT we must enter deeper into the description of such an extensive virtue, and consider it in the several objects towards which it may be exercised, and the several ways of expressing it.

MEEKNESS is a duty in our conduct,

### I. TOWARDS God: and,

### II. TOWARDS man.

*FIRST* then, 'Tis requisite that we be meek towards God; and that with respect both to the *revelation of his will*, and to the methods of his *providence*.

I. IN the revelation of the will of God, we must consider what we are directed to *believe*, and what we are enjoin'd to *practise*; and in each of these we shall see occasion for the exercise of this grace of meekness.

(1.) As to that part of the revelation of the will of God which directs us what we are to *believe*, there are some dark and unconceivable mysteries in it, which as it was not in the power of



human understanding to *contrive* or to *find out*, so neither is it forward to *entertain* them when *they are revealed*: as the trinity of persons in one God-head, the co-eternity of God the Son with God the Father, the real conjunction or union of the divine and human nature in Christ, the doctrine of his sacrifice for us upon the cross, the resurrection of the dead, &c. There are also several strange accounts given us of matters of fact, the wonders wrought by *Moses* and the Prophets, the extraordinary birth of Christ, from the womb of a virgin, his numerous and surprizing miracles, &c. all these are things which reason, prejudiced by vain philosophy, knows not how to take to, but stands perplexed and wavering, 'till a spirit of meekness subjects the understanding, and over-rules all arguments of vulgar reasoning to submission to the authority and truth of God who has revealed them, and thus they pass into matters of faith. Those who are too curious and critical in their enquiries into these things, and will believe nothing of revelation, but what they are able to make out by common principles of reason and observation, consider not how very weak and imperfect human understanding is, even in its best improvements, how little we know, or can know, of beings superior to our own. A meek and humble spirit considers this, and applies it, and looks with awe and reverence upon the sacred mysteries of religion, as in their own nature too high to be *understood* by us, yet, as God has revealed them, necessary and reasonable to be *believed*. But such as have not this disposition, such as are proud, conceited, and self-willed, such as imagine they understand things, and will believe nothing they cannot understand, are in a fair way to lose their *religion* in the extravagance of their *reason* and *fancy*. I have not time now to prove that the Scriptures, which re-  
veal

veal to us all those matters of faith, are the inspiration and the word of God, though there are abundant arguments that put it beyond all dispute; but I will shew you in a few words, the ground we have in general to rely upon what the holy Scriptures teach us, and how far meekness is concern'd in that belief, and for brevity we will consider only the case of the New Testament: in order to believe the *historical* part, that there really was such a person as *Christ*, born miraculously of a pure virgin, testify'd to be the Son of God by an audible voice from heaven two several times, that he wrought many miracles beyond the power of art or nature, and such as appear from the circumstances of them to admit of no collusion or fraud; that he liv'd an innocent and divine life, that he suffer'd upon the cross, and that he rose again the third day from the grave, we have need only of the same meekness that is requisite in believing any civil history in the world, *viz.* that we should not obstinately reject the uncontrouled testimony of that age wherein he lived, and of so many ages since, and of persons who for ought appears, are at least as credible (if not, through the particular marks of integrity we may perceive in them, much more so) as any other historians, or any other persons in the age we live in. If any story should be publish'd in our age, by discreet, sober writers, and not contradicted by the present times, it were an injury to us, an affront to common faith and credit, if posterity should not believe it; and those who so refuse it, are not masters of that ingenuity and modesty which becomes them. Submitting then upon this ground to believe the *historical* part, the *doctrinal* will force its way; for if I believe the particulars before mention'd, the passages of his life related by the four Evangelists, it will appear that Christ was an extraordinary person, a Prophet sent

from God, and inspir'd by God; and if so, meekness and reason will both tell us we ought to believe without difficulty, whatever he affirms of the nature of God, of himself, of the necessity, and design of his sufferings, of his coming again to judge the world, &c. though our reason cannot comprehend them all, because it will be certain that *he knew the truth* of these things, and that being sent from God to instruct us, God would not have owned him in so extraordinary a manner, if he had not *faithfully discharg'd* his office, or if in any thing he had *impos'd upon us*, and *deceiv'd us*. But though we have this reason to believe him, it is a reason from meekness, which submits our understanding to the testimony of Christ, and insists not upon those objections to the doctrine which the noisy pertness of our fancies, our shallow and conceited notions, might pretend to raise.

(2.) As to that other part of the revelation of the will of God, which concerns *our practice*; there is great need also of this same grace of *meekness* in complying with it: for by a strange perverseness in mens tempers, some are as apt to *despise* the precepts of virtue and holiness deliver'd to us in the holy Scriptures, because they are *plain* and *intelligible*, and stoop to ordinary capacities, as others are to *reject* matters of faith, because their reason *cannot comprehend* them. But even withal they have more or less this disadvantage, that sin has gain'd the first possession of our hearts, and pride particularly has usurp'd the dominion in us; we are apt to be *self-will'd* and *humour-some*, to have a good opinion of all we do, and not to care for any precepts which restrain our appetites and passions, and teach us to deny our selves, or reproach us for having done amiss. 'Tis easy therefore to perceive what work there is for  
*meekness*

*meekness here.* And *first*, we are highly to honour those precepts of an holy life, as the dictates of God, who is perfect and unerring Wisdom, the Sovereign Lord of all things, the Author of our salvation, and who accordingly has the sole right of prescribing how he will be served, and upon what conditions we shall be blessed and saved. *Solomon* tells us, that \* *where the word of a king is there is power* ; and if the power and word of a king is not to be despised, surely much less is that of him who is the King of kings. Let us therefore, when we read or reflect upon any particular precept, any command of God in holy Scripture, do it with all that respect and reverence, at least, with which we would receive the commands of our prince, or our parents, or any other whom we highly value for their wisdom, or their faithfulness. *Secondly*, we must obediently and carefully observe and practise all we are commanded by him. We must be willing to be governed, setting aside our own pride, and prejudices, our lusts and passions, † *casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth it self against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ*. And all this cannot be done, but by the spirit of meekness, which appears hereby to have so great an influence with respect to our duty to God, that it reaches to the same extent with our obedience, and is the best foundation for it, as pride and presumption are usually at the root of every sin.

THE *second* exercise of meekness towards God, regards the methods of his *Providence*, with relation either to our selves or others. Most men are of that tender and delicate composition, that querulous and complaining temper, that they can

\* Eccles. viii. 4.

† 2 Cor. x. 5.

bear nothing; so fond of themselves, so possessed with a good opinion of their own merit, and so devoted to the enjoyments of honour, wealth and pleasure, that they look upon every *light* affliction as an hardship, and every *great* one as intolerable; and this makes them fretful and impatient, murmuring against God, and bemoaning themselves with a silly and indecent, as well as sinful passion. Or when they look abroad, and see how many evils and sufferings happen to mankind, which fall not out so exactly and regularly as to be always called the punishment of such a sin upon such a person, but on the contrary, many wicked men prosper in the world, and many good and virtuous are pressed hard with sufferings, they are apt to reflect upon God as a hard master, or to think he wholly neglects the world, and cares not either what we do or suffer. But meekness would bring us to a better notion, and teach us to consider God,

*FIRST*, As a Sovereign Lord, under whose dominion all his creatures are, his government absolute, and without all conditions or limitations, but what he is pleased to impose upon himself, and what he receives from himself by the benign influences of his love and mercy; and therefore as we are all the work of his hands, created to serve his glory, he may surely dispose of us all at his own will and pleasure, and to his own ends: for which reason the truly meek Christian will patiently submit to whatever suffering God shall lay upon him, and be willing that God should be glorified in him, *\* whether it be by life, or by death.*

*SECONDLY*, We are to consider God as a lawgiver, annexing penalties to the breach of his laws, and these penalties issuing from an exact and

\* Phil. i. 20.

pure justice, in which there is no mixture of oppression or cruelty, but very much of favour and mercy; and this pleads very highly for the practice of meekness under afflictions, since we are all (even the best of us) guilty before God, and deserve much worse than even the most unhappy of us can suffer in this world. As to the case of other men, the sufferings of the good and virtuous may be accounted for the same way; and as to the flourishing estate of the wicked, whom God seems at present not to punish or take notice of, why should *our eye be evil, because he is good? Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?* This meekness would suggest, and we should hearken to: for if God, who is immediately concerned in the provocations, thinks fit (in mercy to the sinners, to give them farther time for repentance) to bear with them, what have *we* to do to call *fire from heaven* upon them?

But *thirdly*, We are to consider God as a *Father*, for so he is represented to us in the holy Scriptures, and the obedient are his sons, whom nevertheless he many times exercises with great tryals and sufferings in the world, but it is their duty to distinguish and observe the *design* of these, and by a just consideration of that, to satisfy themselves with the proceeding, and make that pious use of it, for which the affliction was ordained. \* *We have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence, shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? † For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.* This also is the language of meekness, which I have now shewn to be necessary in all our deportment towards God. It follows, in the next place, that I should consider this grace,

\* Heb. xii. 9.

† Ibid. ver. 6.

II. As *man* is the object of it; and here we have a very large field before us. For men may be considered under these three ranks,

1. SUPERIORS:
2. EQUALS; and
3. INFERIORS:

and to every of these the meekness of a Christian is to diffuse and extend it self.

[I.] *FIRST* therefore, for *superiors*; all those in general who are *above us*, and especially such as have a right to *govern* and *command us*.

IN the number of superiors to whom we are to exercise this grace of meekness, we must reckon first, the *supreme civil power*, established by the laws and custom of the country, whether in a single hand, or many, and by whatever title distinguished, as Emperor, King, Prince, States, &c. For let the constitution or the name be what it will, if there be an investiture of power legally in the person or persons to govern, there is a *meekness* due towards them, from those who are under their government. I shall here confine my self to the polity of our own kingdom, and consider how we are to express this christian meekness to the king or queen. And this we are to do,

*FIRST*, By a chearful and diligent observance of their commands, or of the laws by which they govern. By the commands of the king or queen, (respecting still the government of our own nation,) I mean those proclamations or injunctions issued out in their names, (by virtue of their royal prerogative) upon particular occasions, or any present emergency. By the laws, I mean those which are generally known and called so, the statutes and common customs by which this kingdom is governed. The meekness we are to shew in relation to both these, is an *observance*, or actual *performance* of

of them, and obedience to them, doing what they enjoin, and forbearing to do what they forbid. And this obedience must be *cheerful* and *diligent*, not so much from fear lest we be punished for the neglect or contempt of them, but from a principle of duty and humility; \* *Ye must needs be subject*, says St. Paul, *not only for wrath, but for conscience sake.*

THE *second* expression of meekness towards them, is a patient and quiet submission to the punishments they inflict. † *For they are the ministers of God, to execute wrath upon him that doth evil; whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God, and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.*

BUT beside the supreme or sovereign, there are other subordinate powers commission'd and deriv'd from that, subordinate indeed to the prince, but still superior to the subjects, viz. magistrates or governors appointed for particular purposes, and in particular districts, for the better administration of justice, and other ends of civil government. And these also have the same sacred stamp of authority upon them, though not so large and extensive. St. Peter is very clear in this matter, ‡ *Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him, for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well.* To these our meekness is to express it self, *first*, By honour and reverence, according to their respective qualities and degrees of power; and this forbids all despising and degrading of them, all calumniating and speaking ill of them, all rude, bold and obstinate behaviour before them. *Secondly*, By obedience to their due commands in

\* Rom. xiii. 5.

† Ibid. ver. 24.

‡ 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14.



the exercise of that authority which is entrusted with them. And, *thirdly*, In submitting without resentment or impatience to the penalties which they inflict in the execution of the laws upon us.

IN the second order of superiors to whom we are to exercise this grace of meekness, are the *governors and pastors of the church*, the bishops, priests, and deacons, whom our Lord Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd of the sheep, has set over us for our edification, and by whom accordingly his spiritual *Israel* has been fed and taught, govern'd and guided these sixteen hundred years and more, ever since the time of the Apostles. To these the first duty of meekness is reverence and regard. This St. Paul requires, \* *And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour amongst you, and are over you in the Lord, and to esteem them very highly for their works sake.* Their office, and the work they do, require this tribute of respect from those especially, amongst whom and to whom they do it. It was the work of Christ himself, who went about preaching, and praying, rebuking and comforting; and as he is still the Head of the Church, he has appointed this order of men to supply his personal absence in the world, and shew unto us continually the way of salvation. And for this reason it is also, that, in the second place, our meekness towards them ought to shew it self in a due obedience to their instructions, admonitions and reproofs. † *Obey them that have the rule over you, says St. Paul, and submit your selves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give an account: that they may do it with joy and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.* If you regard not their advice, the loss will be your own, though the grief of it must needs make them un-

\* 1 Thess. v. 12, 13.

† Heb. xiii. 17.

easy. As to the particulars of this obedience, it is to be (1.) in matters of *doctrine*; we are to submit to their directions and expositions, where they are not *plainly* contrary to the word of God; for in matters of doubt and difficulty, we ought rather to rely on their judgments than our own. And (2.) in point of worship, that is, the order and manner of publick prayers and services, which with us are drawn into one form, and commonly known by the name of the book of *Common-Prayer*. To this we ought in meekness to conform our selves, as to the care and wisdom of the rulers of our Church. And (3.) we are to express our obedience (and in that our meekness) to them in the point of *ecclesiastical discipline*, exercised according to the law of Christ, and the constitutions of particular national Churches. The ordinary, and such as are in authority under him, are here in the place of magistrate, and officers of justice, to see that scandals be punish'd, and decency and good order kept up, according to the spiritual laws or canons of the Church; and such as they ought to be obey'd: \* *If he neglect to hear the Church, says our Saviour, let him be to thee as an heathen man and a publican.*

THERE are still remaining three other objects of this christian meekness, under the head of superiors, and they are parents, masters, and husbands, to whom there is a debt of meekness owing respectively from their children, servants, and wives. I am not now concern'd to lay down the *whole duty* of every one of these relations, but only so much of it as must proceed from a spirit of *meekness*, and that is the same in general, which I have mention'd two or three times before, upon account of other superiors, *viz.* (1.) Reverence or honour, and (2.) Obedience.

\* Matth. xviii. 17.

To begin with the first, which is reverence; and here,

I. WITH the reverence due from *children* to their *parents*, who next under God are authors of their being, their lives, their substance, and all other advantages, and having by the very law of nature a large power and command, are to be owned and respected accordingly. Thus the fifth commandment expressly obliges us to *HONOUR our father and mother*; and by several other places in holy Scripture, it appears to be a natural duty, presumed, known, and taken for granted in all parts of the world. So God complaining of the rudeness of the priests, and the irreverence of the people, and the dishonourable use of holy things amongst the *Jews*, takes the advantage of reprehending it from the custom, or at least the acknowledged and presum'd right of reverence and honour to parents, in these words, \* *A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if I then be a Father, where is my honour, — saith the Lord of hosts.* Agur also giving an account of an evil generation of men, reckons this amongst the rest; † *There is a generation that curseth their father, and doth not bless their mother.* And how monstrous and unnatural the sin is, appears from the punishment assign'd it in the same chapter, ‡ *The eye that mocketh at his father, &c. the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.* By all which it is sufficiently evident, that children owe a reverence to their parents. The particulars of which I shall only give you in general. It expresses it self in all civility and decency of manners, in complying with those infirmities to which the years of parents probably may expose them; in loving their persons and their memory, standing

\* Mal. i. 6.

† Prov. xxx. 11.

Ibid. ver. 17.

up for their reputation, supplying their wants, if they be poor, refreshing and comforting their sorrows, easing and removing their burdens, doing them all the pieties and honours of children, while they are living, and following them to their graves with all requisite decency and solemnity. All which are so much the dictates of reason and nature, that we could not but discern the character of a duty in them, if it had not been renewed by the injunctions of Christianity.

2. A reverence is due from *servants* to their *masters*; and this also by the common reason and practice of all mankind, confirm'd by the laws of our religion. St. Paul has fully enough determin'd this in his first epistle to *Timothy*; \* *Let as many servants as are under the yoke account their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed.* Honour here (though it includes obedience) I take to imply chiefly and primarily respect and reverence, an esteem of their master's person, a readiness to protect and defend him from injuries, a tenderness and zeal for his reputation, and a behaviour of humility and good manners towards him upon all occasions; not perty and saucily † *answering again*, or contradicting them; but shewing all due submission, ‡ *not only to the good and gentle, but also to the forward.* And this meekness is the more necessary, (according to the text first cited) that the christian religion be not evil spoken of, that there be no pretence to charge it with abolishing so reasonable a point of decency and good order, or encouraging sauciness and pride, and setting servants upon a level with their masters.

3. A reverence is also due from *wives* unto their *husbands*; for notwithstanding this is a relation of

1 Tim. vi. 1.

† Tit. ii. 9.

‡ 1 Pet. ii. 18.

the nearest endearment of any other in the world, it leaves still some inequality; the *husband* is to be esteem'd the *head*, and upon that account, to have the reverence and respect of a superior: this St. Paul expressly commands, when having obliged the husband to love his wife, he concludes with this reciprocal duty of her to him, \* *Let the wife see that she reverence her husband.* In order to this, I suppose, it is, that St. Peter recommends to all christian women, the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which will certainly shew it self, in bearing with the husband's passions and infirmities, in forbearing all reproachful, bitter, or provoking language to him, in representing him to the best advantage abroad, and treating him with the mildest and most affectionate carriage at home, putting a favourable interpretation upon all his actions, submitting to his judgment, as the more able to advise, and being contented with the state of life and provision which he is able to make.

(2.) To consider now the meekness of obedience in all these relations; and,

1. In the *first* place, that of *children* to their *parents*. † *Children*, says St. Paul, *obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.* And that we may not think this *Εν Κυρίῳ*, [*in the Lord*] is such a restraint of the natural duty of obedience, as to leave room for any captious pretences of liberty to the disobedient, the same Apostle elsewhere delivers the precept thus; † *Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord.* These two texts interpret one another; for children are to obey their parents *in the Lord*, so as that they make not use of that limitation to excuse them from a general and hearty obedience to the utmost of their power; and yet they are only

\* Eph. v. 33.

† Eph. vi. 1.

‡ Col. iii. 20.

so to obey their parents *in all things*, as is consistent with their obedience to the other laws of God, and not to make this precept a pretence for committing any known sin, or neglecting any necessary duty, upon command of a parent. An obedience in children, thus temper'd, is of so high acceptance and reward with God, that St. Paul takes notice that it is the *first command* to which there is annex'd a promise, \* *That it may be well with thee, and that thou mayst live long upon the earth.*

2. THE obedience due from *servants*, to their *masters*, and this also we shall find expressly commanded. † *Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh: not with eye service as men pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God. And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as unto the Lord, and not unto men.* The very same precept we have, and almost in the same words, in the epistle to the *Ephesians* ‡, *Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters, &c.*

3. AND lastly, There is an obedience also due from wives to their husbands. And this is clearly the doctrine of the Apostle, || *Wives, submit your selves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord; for the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.* And in another place, \* *Wives, submit your selves to your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.* St. Peter also requires the same, † *Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands*, and goes on inculcating upon all of that relation, the ornament of a meek and peaceable spirit, as being those, who though they have a right to govern the rest of the family,

\* Eph. vi. 2, 3. † Col. iii. 22, 23. ‡ Eph. vi. 5, 6, 7.  
|| Eph. v. 22, 23, 24. \* Col. iii. 18. † 1 Pet. iii. 1.

are yet themselves to be govern'd by their husbands.

[2.] WE are now to consider another rank of men, our *equals*, to whom this grace of meekness is to shew it self in our behaviour. And these I shall consider under a threefold distinction of them, as friends, as enemies, and as strangers or persons indifferent towards us.

1. OUR first enquiry therefore shall be, what acts of meekness our *friends* may justly expect from us. And these are,

(1.) *COMPLIANCE* with their *humour*, in things which are *innocent at least*, though not convenient; abstaining from what we know will provoke them, or probably may do so; and when they happen to be uneasy, wisely and charitably bearing with their infirmities; not violently and rashly opposing *our* passion to *theirs*. And this compliance or condescension is the very cement of all friendship, without which it would dissolve, or be soon broke to pieces. For the tempers of men, their appetites and inclinations, are different, their judgments may be oft mistaken, and their apprehensions wrong; the passions and desires of some men are not so easily govern'd as they should be, and by many concurring disadvantages they are exposed to great errors, and to great failings. For which reason 'tis necessary their friends should so far exercise this grace of meekness towards them, as, where the matter is not great, to wave insisting upon their own opinion against theirs, though perhaps they know themselves to be in the right; to deny themselves the employments they most delight in, when it may oblige and serve their friend, and to govern themselves in many other little circumstances so as may be most *agreeable*, or at least, not disagreeable to him. But in matters of great consequence they must reprove him, they are mildly  
and

and at a proper season, to represent to him his sin committed, or dissuade him from committing it; but not imperiously and passionately to reproach him, or exasperate and confirm him in the pursuit of it by an ill-manag'd contradiction. For he who takes this rough and surly course with his friend, if he design to profit him by it, mistakes in the means, and if he do not, fails in the intention.

THE second office of meekness toward our friends, is *submission* to their *rebukes and admonitions*. It is the duty of one friend, faithfully and directly to reprove another, and that both by the law of *Moses*, and of *Christ*. *Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him*, says the first; and the other (deliver'd us by *St. Paul*) enjoins, that *if any man obey not the word of God, we should note that man, and admonish him as a brother*. Now in making this a duty of friends and equals one to another, God has admirably testified his own good-will to us, by providing us with living monitors, familiar, and of the same condition with our selves, kind, faithful to our interest, and every other way obliging, and who might be the likeliest persons to prevail with us, to secure our own eternal happiness, and leave the paths of hell and destruction. And because friendly *reproof* is so profitable to this purpose, it is affirmed by *Solomon* to be better, even when it is bold and open, than that silent secret love which like a false glass presents no spots, no errors or infirmities. But that it may be effectual, and do the good that is design'd by it, the rebuke must fall upon a willing breast, and be received like showers upon the soft mould, without noise and without recrimination. Those drops of rain which fall upon stones and hard bodies, are dash'd in pieces and scatter'd into little and unuseful portions: So are the reproofs of a friend which fall upon a stubborn



and impatient sinner. There remains no advantage of them, and the man suffers under this unhappiness, that the best part of friendship is through his own ill humour wholly unprofitable to him. 'Tis necessary therefore that we should not be proud and perverse, not fretful and inconsiderate, not apt to make unworthy returns, or false excuses: but consider the admonition, as sick persons consider physick at the hands of the prescriber, who for the hope of advantage by it, are content to swallow bitter and ill-tasted medicines.

THE third branch of meekness toward our equals, in the case of friendship or neighbourhood, is *preference* or *giving place* to them, or preferring them in a way of *honour, respect* and *reputation above our selves*. This to *superiors* is granted by the general voice of all mankind; though in *practice*, even *they* are often encroach'd upon, by the pride of forward spirits: but the giving place to our equals, may perhaps be thought dishonourable and mean, an argument of a weak mind, insensible of our own rank, and of the esteem we may justly challenge in the world. Yet the christian law obliges us to this, in point of meekness. 'Tis plainly enjoin'd by St. Paul; \* *Be kindly affectioned one to another; with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another*. Christians ought to give their neighbours the esteem and valuation, which often, perhaps, in strict right and justice, may not belong to them, because we know not all the circumstances that must go to the stating of their worth and merit exactly, and 'tis good to err upon the favourable hand in such a case. But our own weakness and defects, our many sins, and great corruptions, we know, (or should know) more of, and therefore ought to be most severe upon our selves. In

\* Rom. xii. 10.

judging of our selves, we are to proceed by exact measures, by the scales of justice, and the weights of innocence; but in our accounts of others, we ought to throw in charitable grains, and fair allowances for those merits and excellencies in them, which *we* may not be *acquainted with*: so that supposing the case to be in reality equal betwixt us, the super-added charity must needs bear down our neighbour's scale, and therefore preference is to be given him. And that it is so far from being an injury or disreputation to any man so to do, as to be rather, on the contrary, a sure step to honour and esteem, appears from the discourse of our \*Saviour upon this head, when dining at the house of a certain *Pharisee*, and perceiving the vanity of the other guests in chusing the uppermost places at the board, he supposes the case of two men invited to an entertainment, the one assuming to himself the highest place, the other voluntarily seating himself at the lower end of the table; and puts the company in mind that it is more honour to the latter, to have it said to him, *Friend, go up higher*, than to the former, to have it taken notice of, that he was gotten of himself too high already; and concludes with this very observable remark, *Whosoever exalts himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted*.

2. I come now to consider the duty of meekness to such as are our *enemies*. And this may be comprised in three heads also, *forbearance, patience, and benevolence*.

(1.) **FORBEARANCE**; by which I mean the keeping from giving any just or probable offence to an adversary, and the not taking all advantages in law against him, for inconsiderate words and actions, or trifling and petty trespasses; nor always flying

\* Luke xiv. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11.

to the refuge of the laws, and the judgment of courts, even where the injury is considerable. Such is the temper recommended to us by St. Paul, when he beseeches the *Ephesians* to *\* walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love.* By these we honour the Gospel of Christ, and adorn our profession of it; whereas the going to law contentiously and idly is forbidden us by our Lord himself. He who endures evils, and forbears advantages, does most like a Christian; though nevertheless, where the injury is of great consequence, it is not unlawful to endeavour, by the course of publick justice, to do our selves right.

(2.) THE next instance of meekness to our enemies is *patience*, by which I mean the forbearing *private revenge, returning evil for evil* in any other method than by authority of law. Patience is the subjecting of a man's self to suffering; and when the suffering is *from men*, we are to be as void of discontent and revenge, as when it is inflicted upon us by the immediate hand of God. The state of Christianity ought to be a state of good agreement with all mankind; and the great obstruction of this is not so much the striking of one stroke by an offender, as the returning it by the sufferer; for this indeed is the full birth of enmity and contradiction. An evil man may do much wrong to his neighbour; but the greater wrong, which is a wrong to Christianity, is the revenging of that evil. This point of meekness is more often and earnestly press'd upon us, than almost any other part of our religion; and that not only in general precepts, such as, *† If it be possible, as much as in you lies, live peaceably with all men*; wherein the duty now be-

\* Eph. iv. 1, 2.

† Rom. xii. 18.

fore us: certainly is included; but also in particular and exprefs terms. \**See that none render evil for evil to any man.* †*Charity is not easily provoked, bears all things — endures all things.* ‡*Avenge not your selves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.* || *If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses.*

THE like in substance with these we find in many other texts of Scripture, from which we cannot but conclude, that all revenge (and not only that, but all passionate, bitter, and reviling language, to or of an enemy,) is utterly forbid to a Christian, of whom 'tis expected that he should imitate his Lord and Master, ∴ *Who when he was reviled, reviled not again, when he suffered he threatned not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.* But even this is not all; for,

(3.) A third branch of meekness to our enemies, is still behind, which is *benevolence, returning good for evil*, and keeping always a temper ready to be reconciled. The meek Christian is to overcome evil with good. \**If his enemy hunger he is to feed him, if he thirst he is to give him drink:* he is to shew all manner of readiness to do him any good office which lies in his power; *to do good to them that hate him, to bless them that curse him, to pray for them that despitefully use him and persecute him; not only † not rendering evil for evil, railing for railing; but contrariwise blessing.* He is to ‡ *be kind, tender-hearted and forgiving*, and to offer all fair christian terms of accommodation. For even this the sufferer is to do, as well as the offender; and

\* 1 Thes. v. 15.

|| Matth. vi. 15.

† 1 Pet. iii. 9.

† 1 Cor. xiii. 5, 7.

∴ 1 Pet. ii. 3.

‡ Eph. iv. 32.

‡ Rom. xii. 19.

\* Rom. xii. 20.

this I suppose to be enforced in that of our Saviour, \* *when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any.* This therefore the meek Christian is to do, if he would acquit himself as such to his enemy.

THE third distinction we made in equals, was of such as are strangers, or persons indifferent to us. The meekness we are to express to them is so much the same with several of the foregoing instances, that I need not enlarge upon it, the reason and analogy of things will point them out. I will only add, as to these persons, that we should abstain from giving them offence, and provoking them wilfully and unworthily; for though we cannot yet call them our *friends*, we have no reason to make them our *enemies*; we ought not to be positive or contradicting, imperious or uncivil towards them, or curiously searching into their infirmities, but be always ready to serve and oblige them as it falls in our way, always candidly interpreting their words and actions, charitably presuming the best in all cases, and conversing meekly with them upon all occasions.

[3.] THE *third* and last order of men, towards whom the duty of meekness is to shew it self, is that of *inferiors*; and they being the object, their superiors must be those who are to exercise this grace towards them; which may be done two ways, by humility and by gentleness.

FIRST, we are to consider the humility which it becomes superiors to shew towards their inferiors. And,

(1.) THAT which is due from *sovereigns* and subordinate *magistrates*, to their subjects, or the members of their jurisdiction. Magistrates (whether supreme or subordinate) are appointed by God

\* Mark xi. 25.

for the publick service, the good order and government of societies, that under them the community may be safe and flourishing, and *live quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty*; and not societies erected purely to serve the pride, and power, and grandeur of the magistrate. The humility therefore which becomes those who are in posts of authority, consists in this, that they should not scornfully despise the society (or any member of it) which they govern; they should not be difficult of access, or take upon them unnecessary degrees of state and reservedness; but with a fair and condescending temper respect the persons, encourage and reward the services, and meet half way the affections of their subjects, as those who bear the same image and character of manhood and Christianity with themselves; and also apply themselves with a chearful diligence to do justice to the meanest, as well as the greatest among them, and to answer the ends of their institution for the good and benefit of mankind, pursuing it with a tender and paternal care.

(2.) THE like humility is to be expressed by the governors of the Church towards all such as are under their charge. St. Peter, \* *requiring the bishops and elders to feed the flock*, puts in this caution, *that they should not do it as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples of meekness, and other virtues, to them*. For says another Apostle, † *We preach not our selves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and our selves your servants for Jesus sake*. So far, indeed, as these governors may be stamp'd with any civil character of honour or authority, they may justly challenge and expect the rights of it; the management of all things under their care and charge, ought to be with much condescension and lowliness,

\* 1 Pet. v. 3.

† 2 Cor. iv. 5.

(3.) THE third order is that of parents, whom it concerns to use that kind of humility towards their children, which shews it self in condescension and decent familiarity; considering that their children are a part of themselves, whom, as the Apostle takes notice, no man hates, so also no man despises. It is not unbecoming this relation, sometimes to desire, where it may command; for love, that great precept of the law of nature, must needs so far suppress and level the superiority, as to make the relation sweet and pleasant. In regard to which, though it may well enough become parents to require the subjection of their children, yet not to use them merely as servants. And then,

(4.) THOUGH the practice of the world has made the inferiority of *servants* the vilest and most contemptible, especially in those places where it was their custom to buy and sell them for their lives, upon which score they were esteemed no better than their goods and chattels, and thought to be so absolutely in their disposal, that they might do so or with them as they pleased; yet by the christian law it will appear that even *servants* are a branch of those inferiors to whom humility and condescension is to be used; and therefore, though their servile rank obliges them to an absolute subjection, their masters ought to treat them; nevertheless, according to the rules of meekness and charity. As they are fellow Christians, admitted to the same glorious hopes, entituled to the same inheritance and reward; this relation of brotherhood ought so to moderate the stile, as to prevent all unreasonable and scornful neglects, and take away the marks of villany and contempt. This I forbid to be understood to any evil purposes, as if the state of Christianity took away all superiority: no, it was not intended to alter the state of things so far, but as it finds men masters and servants, so it leaves them,

them, only it has the force and power to bridle the extravagancies of men, and that excess of dominion which was the common practice of the *Gentiles*.

(5.) THIS humility is also to be exercised by *husbands* to their *wives*, whom they are so to treat, even as their own flesh. For this is a relation of that strict unity and endearment; that height and distance cannot but be a great wrong to it. And if husbands love their wives, even as themselves, with that entire and absolute affection which becomes them, there cannot possibly be much of superiority discovered; for love, I told you, was of that nature, that it equals those betwixt whom there might be otherwise some disparity.

(6.) ALL others, whoever they be, that are below us, though we have no authority or dominion over them, have a right to the good offices of humility and condescension from us; even those who beg at our doors, are still to be treated as men, and fellow Christians; not with that contempt and pride which too many affect to shew towards them.

I shall only say in general, upon this head, that we should despise no body, for \* *whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his Maker*.

2. THE second instance or expression of meekness towards inferiors, is gentleness, which is likewise to run through the several relations above-mention'd.

(1.) IN the prince, or magistrates governing under him, (who, according to St. *Paul*, are the ministers of God to every one for good, and therefore ought to deal with those under their jurisdiction; so as it may appear they have no design, but for their good, or of that of the community by them) this gentleness is to express it self, in the

\* Prov. xvii. 5.



wife and charitable moderation of penalties and executions, so far as may not too much slacken the reins of government, and teach offenders insolence by impunity; in punishing (when they are oblig'd to do it) with regret and uneasiness, in imitation of Almighty God, whose officers and commissioners they are, and *who has no pleasure in the death or punishment of the wicked, and does not willingly afflict the children of men*; in avoiding all tyranny and oppression; in giving a ready ear to the complaints of the injur'd, and the requests of all who sue for justice, compassionating their losses and sufferings, and being always forward to employ the power they have for their relief.

(2.) THE governors of the Church are to use a fair, gentle, and moderate behaviour to the people committed to their charge. \* *The servant of the Lord*, says St. Paul, (directing himself to Timothy, Bishop of Ephesus) *must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves*. And though there often is occasion for ecclesiastical censures and inflictions for the reduction of sinners, and preserving good order and obedience, yet in the common practice of life, there is nothing more an ornament to the fathers of the Church, than a benign and gentle usage of the flock entrusted with them.

(3.) THIS gentleness is also to be exercised to children by their parents. St. Paul is very express to this purpose, † *Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*. And elsewhere, almost in the same words; ‡ *Fathers, provoke not your children, lest they be discouraged*. By the former text it appears, that there is a nurture and admonition,

\* 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25.

† Eph. vi. 4.

‡ Col. iii. 21.

or a discipline, which parents are to use, in restraining them from all manner of vicious practices; but the exercise of it is not to be so severe and sharp, as to provoke them to impatient and disobedient anger, nor so as to discourage and dishearten them. For *too much* discipline may have an ill effect, as well as *too little*; and all tempers are not able to bear the severity of it. This, therefore, should be wisely observed by parents, that they neither be too remiss, so as to lose their authority, and neglect the government of their children; nor yet so severe and tyrannical, as if they were practising upon their beasts of labour.

(4.) THIS gentleness is still farther to be expressed by *masters* towards their *servants*. The Apostle requires it of them, that they should *forbear threatening*, as *knowing that their Master is in heaven, and there is no respect of persons with God*. Christian masters are to be as *parents* to their servants, and ought not to provoke them by passionate chiding and severe corrections, by evil and imperious usage, but reserving their anger and their discipline to proper times and provocations, and confining it within due bounds; they are in general to behave themselves moderately and charitably to them, laying reasonable and favourable burdens upon them, allowing them convenient time for rest or recreation, encouraging their honest labours, and in their whole conduct towards them, remembering themselves to be the servants of the great Lord and Governor of heaven and earth, to whom they must give account, as of other things, so also of their behaviour towards these dependants.

(5.) THE husband is obliged in the same law of gentleness to his wife; for thus runs the command, *Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them*; treat them not with a morose and unkind peevishness, a surly or a boisterous carriage, but  
with

with all that tenderness, that soft and affectionate, that mild and grateful language, which may endear you to them, and make their lives a comfort.

(6.) LASTLY, This gentleness must extend to all who are in rank, fortune, or knowledge inferior to us, and be shewn by an affable and courteous temper, a calm and easy conversation and behaviour towards them. For the precept is general, that we should be \* *no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men.* That † *all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from us.* ‡ *And this is the true wisdom from above, which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits.*

WE have now very largely gone through the description of meekness. It remains now,

II. THAT we explain the *promise* made to it, or consider and apply the *blessing*; *Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.* In doing this, we shall,

I. ENQUIRE what is meant by inheriting the earth. Now by this must needs be meant the possession or enjoyment of any of the profits or benefits which men are capable of in this present life. And these are many, if we take in the whole compass; for into this account, we are to put a long and healthful life, a fair and numerous posterity, a pleasant habitation, a good neighbourhood, success, honour, peace and quietness, command, reputation, riches, and other earthly advantages. Earth being the place where all these are conferred, and the nature of them differing from (or at least being inferior to) the rewards of heaven, they may be properly stiled the blessings of the earth.

\* Tit. iii. 2.

† Eph. iv. 31.

‡ Jam. iii. 17.

THE inheritance of the earth, therefore, must be the possession or enjoyment of some of these, for it is not necessary we should include *all* of them; but he may be said to inherit the earth, who has the enjoyment but of some one or other of these blessings, and especially if it be in any full and remarkable measure.

2. WE must make out the truth of this promise; that the inheritance of the earth, in some or other the particulars above-mentioned, is actually the reward or portion of the meek. And this will appear upon a double account, (1.) As meekness, in the latitude I have expressed it to you, is the best and chiefest instrument of securing peace in the world; (2.) As it has also farther, a proper and peculiar influence upon some special advantages of the present life.

FOR the first of these then, it will be requisite I should a little make it appear, that of all secular felicities, peace is the most large and comprehensive, as taking in many others, and giving indeed a relish to 'em all; and then I must make it evident that peace is secured chiefly by the exercise of this grace of meekness. Now that peace is a most full and copious blessing, will need no other proof than the common sense and experience of all persons, who cannot but take notice that every other instance of felicity, how considerable soever, without the possession of this, is so abated and restrained, that there is nothing at all in it of that relish and satisfaction, which otherwise (crown'd with the addition of peace) it certainly would have; for war and tumult is a stormy sea which shipwrecks every honest fortune, and drowns a great deal of treasure past recovery, and usually the weightiest also sink the soonest. When the *Psalmist* would describe the excellent reward of a righteous man, (which I suppose to be only meant

of the rewards of this world) he does it by this one expression of *peace*. \* *Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace*, viz. it is prosperous and fortunate, rich and honourable, which are all well enough comprized in the name of *peace*. The Prophet *Jeremiah* also brings in the *Jews*, complaining of the miserable state of their captivity; † *We looked for peace, but no good came*. Where we may observe, that peace is made of the same extent and latitude as good; by which is imply'd, that peace is the very salt and relish of all other good things, and without it the goodness of them cannot be enjoyed. The next thing we are to do, is, to shew that meekness is the most apt and proper instrument of making and securing peace, which will be as clear to you as the former, by a little observation. We will take peace, for the present, in that publick sense of the word, wherein it signifies the calm and quiet administration of the state or kingdom, proceeding from an happy concord of the prince and people. Now how far meekness contributes to establish this, is easily visible; for one branch of the meekness due from subjects to their sovereign (as laid down before) was *obedience* (by which we are to understand the actual performance of, or conformity to laws, where they may justly, and with agreement to the law of God, be observed) and this *obedience* or *submission* must produce a good agreement betwixt every good prince and his subjects; and consequently many evils and sufferings, many losses and ruins are thereby prevented, which in open hostilities must needs ensue, where the sovereign and the people are drawn into two parties. This keeps open the books of law and justice, which in the distraction of civil feuds are either

\* Psal. xxxvii. 37.

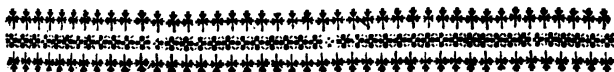
† Jer. viii. 15.

thrown aside or torn asunder; and so much farther also it goes towards securing the inheritance of the earth, that it keeps open the course of trade, and the other honest methods of gain and profit, which are wholly shut up in the time of war; it prevents a deluge of blood, in which may be supposed the loss of our own lives, or of our relations, as well as the destruction of our private fortunes. And therefore as a meek obedience secures us from rebellion, and the confusions incident thereto, it must be look'd upon as a principal instrument of peace. If we go on to consider meekness also as due from superiors to their inferiors, from the sovereign to his subjects, the argument will be still much strengthen'd. The instances of that meekness, I told you, were humility and *gentleness*; and by these the prince is restrain'd from tyranny, violence and oppression; which might be the cause of war on *his* side; he secures to himself, by the mildness of his government, the hearts and affections of his people, and cuts off all pretence and occasion to rebel. And thus you see what influence this grace of meekness yields towards the blessing of publick peace, and in that towards the secure enjoyment of many other blessings. I have not time to run through all the other branches and instances of meekness, and shew you *particularly*, the noble treasure of advantages they abound with to private persons and families; but I shall say something of this *in general*, and *briefly*, under my second head. And in that I am,

(2.) To shew, that meekness has a special and peculiar influence in obtaining or securing some very great advantages of the present life. It very much secures the *honour* and *succession of families*; for this engages parents to the love of their children, and children to the obedience of their parents, and so secures the passing of that honour and estate

estate from father to son, and so downwards, thro' many generations, which by the unnatural differences of such relations, often come to be diverted, and the succession broke by disinheriting. The practice of meekness also betwixt parents and children, husbands and wives, masters and servants, produces that *serenity and happiness within doors*, which is able to make even poverty it self, and many other unhappy circumstances, supportable, and without which the most plentiful fortune, and an hundred other advantages, will be but little comfort. It secures the *estate* also, and the honest ways of *gain and profit*, by the gentleness of the master, *encouraging and rewarding his servants*, and the obedience, faithfulness and respect of the *servant's preserving the fortune and reputation of his master from decay and injury*; by preventing those differences betwixt husband and wife, and those suits at law, and uncharitable contentions in a neighbourhood, which have ruin'd many families, and laid waste great estates; and by taking away all occasions of less enmities and differences, which often proceed from *evil-speaking, passionate reflections, and uncharitable censures*. For the meek man is so far from undervaluing, or speaking evil of his neighbour, that he prefers him to himself, and endeavours to do him all the offices of respect and kindness that he can. And lastly, the *patient forbearing, benevolent carriage* of the meek Christian to his *adversary*, is that which gives him, in his own mind and conscience, not only a *great satisfaction*, but a *great joy*; and it is also an excellent means of making up the difference, and reconciling the enmity, so as that the adversary, from thence, *becomes a friend*; and if he have any thing of an ingenuous temper, cannot help becoming so; for there is a strange attractive power in meekness. Frequent experience shews, that patience in enduring

during affronts and injuries, and that christian spirit of returning good for evil, has blunted the edge even of the keenest malice, and restored affection and friendship betwixt those persons, who by any other means might possibly never have been reconcil'd; and upon these accounts the meek may very well be said to inherit the earth.



## CHAP. IV.

### Of hungring and thirsting after RIGHTEOUSNESS.

MATTH. V. 6.

*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.*



IN this Beatitude there are two things worthy of our consideration.

*FIRST*, The character of the persons concerned.

*SECONDLY*, The reward, or particular blessedness appointed to them.

I. *FIRST*, the persons here described, and they are those *which hunger and thirst after righteousness*. And here I shall (1.) explain to you the meaning of



of *righteousness*; and then (2.) of *hungring and thirsting after righteousness*.

(1.) *RIGHTEOUSNESS*, as the word is used in the New Testament, when it's spoken of as matter of *duty*, is sometimes taken for the particular virtue of *justice*, or the rendering to every man his due. In this sense it is to be understood in those scriptural catalogues, where it is reckon'd, amongst other christian virtues. \* *Thou, O man of God, follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness, &c.* And again, † *follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, &c.* Of this virtue it was, together with the subjects of temperance and judgment to come, that *St. Paul* so effectually reasoned at the bar before *Felix* the governor. And in this sense it respects not only particular men, but also bodies and societies; as well the greater of cities, kingdoms and commonwealths, as the less, of relations and families: for justice is the bond and cement of them all. It is this justice which governs and obeys, rewards and punishes, witnesseth and determines, buys and sells, and runs thro' all the offices and employments, all the trusts, and all the affairs of the world, in which men are concerned one with another; and the rule of it, is not only the law of God in general precepts, or secretly impress'd upon the mind and conscience; but likewise the natural equity of the thing, and the laws of men, and the commands of governors and superiors, applying the general law of God to particular cases and circumstances. This is one sense of righteousness, to which many places, both in the Old and New Testament, refer.

BUT then there is *another* sense of *righteousness*, which is of frequent use in the New Testament, and which I rather take to be the meaning of it

\* 1 Tim. vi. 11.

† 2 Tim. ii. 22.

in the text before us, that is as comprehending the *whole christian religion*. And so to walk before God in righteousness, is to live according to the most perfect way of religion, which Christ has establish'd in the world. This includes the virtue of justice, as one particular among the rest; but such an one, and of so great influence and extent, that you see it has given name to the whole. And indeed all religion, as it is compleated and perfected by Christ, is no more than that very justice which we owe to God, to others, and to our selves; and therefore by the author of the epistle to the *Hebrews*, it is called \* *the word of righteousness*; and by St. Peter *the way of righteousness*. † *It were better for them* (says he, speaking of apostates, and revolvers from Christianity) *not to have known the way of righteousness*, viz. the Gospel of Christ, *than after they have known it to turn from the holy commandments delivered unto them*. But this is not the full extent of this sense of righteousness; for as it comprises the *whole christian duty*, so it likewise includes the *rewards* of it: righteousness is put for *immortality and glory*, as well as for the way to it. And therefore St. Paul calls the hope of glory the *hope of righteousness*; ‡ *for we through the spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith*. And so likewise the crown of glory he calls the *crown of righteousness*: \* *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness*. For as the state of the Gospel is call'd the kingdom of heaven, not only because it came from heaven, and leads us thither; but likewise because it is a state of the same kind, it is but one kingdom, tho' in heaven it has greater majesty and perfection: So also the reward of

\* Heb. v. 13. † 2 Pet. ii. 21. ‡ Gal. v. 5.

\* 2 Tim. iv. 8.

righteousness hereafter is called righteousness, because it is of the same kind; it is righteousness in its full growth and stature. And that description which the Apostle makes of the kingdom of God upon earth, or the state of the Gospel, that it is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, may more properly be apply'd to the kingdom of God in heaven, where there is the perfection of righteousness, an undisturb'd and absolute peace, and the fulness of joy at the right hand of God for ever. But,

*SECONDLY*, I am to shew you the meaning of *hungring and thirsting after righteousness*. And by this may be understood a vehement inclination and disposition of mind, for the advancement of righteousness: not as it implies only the particular virtue of *justice*, but that more extensive kingdom of righteousness and holiness, which the Lord Jesus came to establish upon earth, and will compleat and reward in heaven. And this,

(1.) *WITHIN* our selves, in our own hearts and lives. It is an earnest appetite and endeavour of the mind to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; to follow his example, and to be counted worthy of the inheritance of the saints in light. It is a longing desire to mortify all the remains of sin in us, to get the perfect mastery of our affections and passions, and to bring them under an entire subjection to the law of God; to encrease daily in all christian virtues, and to walk in every thing as becomes the Gospel. It is a fervent breathing after greater degrees of charity, humility, patience, and all other graces; \* *forgetting those things that are behind*, the pitch of goodness we have already attain'd to, *and reaching forth unto those things which are before*, that

\* Phil. iii, 13, 14.

perfection in piety and virtue which alone can satisfy a generous Christian, and *pressing towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*; a weaning our hearts from this world, and fixing them upon that happy state where we shall sin no more, but be establish'd for ever in consummate righteousness. In short, 'tis such an eager and sincere desire of the mind after all this, as answers to the thirst and hunger of the body; and accordingly with respect to these appetites, the Gospel of Christ is called in the New Testament both bread and water. † *Moses gave you not that bread from heaven*, says our Saviour, *but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven*. And again, † *The water I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life*. Now if the kingdom of grace be describ'd by meat and drink, the appetites of hunger and thirst may very well be apply'd to represent the desire of the soul after it. But this desire is not confin'd to the dominion of grace in our own hearts; for,

(2.) It extends also to a diligent and earnest endeavour for promoting righteousness in *others*, in the places or neighbourhood where we live, or even thro' all the world if we were able. It is an hearty desire that the *kingdom of Christ may come, and his will be done in earth as it is in heaven*: That religion may prevail on every side of us by a sincere and universal practice; that the piety and virtue of all who call themselves Christians may in some measure come up to the purity and excellence of their profession, and that all immorality, vice and prophaneness may be every where suppress'd, by whatever charitable, just and prudent methods it may be done; that the name of God may be honoured, his worship and sacraments frequented, and that

† John vi. 32.

‡ John iv. 14.

the power of his laws may influence as far as that of his providence to mankind. Now such an hunger and thirst after righteousness as this, will shew it self in a true Christian, by a pious industry and chearful contribution toward all good works which may promote religion; for it is not only a lazy lifeless wish that all things were better than they are, but a vigorous application as much as in him lies to make them so, by taking care for the due instruction and discipline of his own family in matters which concern their spiritual interest; a careful and religious education of his children; a charitable and discreet advising and reproofing of his friends; the giving away good books for instruction of the poor and ignorant, or reclaiming the vicious; the forwarding charity-schools; contributing to foreign missions for the conversion of infidels; and, in short, the endeavouring by all wise and useful ways to bring religion into practice, and to discountenance vice, and break the power of wickedness in the world. 'Tis such an earnest disposition and application to all this, as may be called an *hungering and thirsting* after it, and that in imitation of our blessed Lord, \* *whose meat it was to do the will of God, and to finish his work.*

II. I am now to shew you that those *are truly blessed*, who hunger and thirst after righteousness, in the sense above explained. And this will appear to you by the consideration of that particular blessing promised to them, *for they shall be filled.* By which is to be understood these three things.

(I.) THAT such as thus hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be sure to *obtain what they desire.* And this,

*FIRST*, with regard to himself and his own spiritual improvement. As it is a great torment to

\* John iv. 34.

a man to desire vehemently, and labour earnestly, and yet to be disappointed; so it is, on the other hand, a great felicity and blessing to have his desires answered, and his endeavours crowned with success. And there is no man so secure of that, as he who places his affections on things above. The great design of God from the beginning of the world was, that all mankind might serve him in holiness and righteousness, and be accordingly rewarded by him; and he in his eternal wisdom has contrived wonderful ways to effect this. He has imprinted the law of righteousness upon the hearts and consciences of men; he has bound it up with their reason and understanding; he has sent his Son into the world to promote the practice of it, both by instructions and his own example; by his holy Spirit he begins the good work of grace where it is not, and cherishes it where it is begun; he is concerned for the neglect of righteousness, and waits long and patiently 'till it be undertaken and accomplish'd; and, in a word, he offers grace and salvation, and invites us earnestly to accept of it, and has instructed us by written laws and precepts in the way of righteousness: And can we imagine, after all, that he will refuse it to such as heartily desire and endeavour after it? We cannot say so much for the blessings of this present life; a man is not sure to obtain what he desires and endeavours after of the *things of this world*. \* *The race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill, but time and chance happen to them all.* Tho' art and industry do naturally tend to make men rich, yet they are often blasted in the event. Experience is a standing evidence of this, that neither fraud nor honesty, righteousness nor unrighteousness, the most

\* Eccl. ix. 11.

likely endeavours, nor the most diligent application, can effectually command the things of this world. But it is not so with the blessings which are better worth enjoying. There is no defeat in the endeavours after *righteousness*. A man cannot be disappointed who labours *to be virtuous*; the love and desire of the thing does naturally enforce the practice, and the practice brings on the habit, and the habit is continually strengthened by the influence of God's holy Spirit, 'till it be finally confirmed and rewarded in glory. God often refuses to hear the prayers even of a good man, when he prays for temporal blessings, and he refuses it in kindness; but he never refuses to grant the request of spiritual blessings, at least he never does it in mercy. \* *If thou criest after knowledge, says Solomon, and liftest up thy voice for understanding, if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God; then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity, and every good path.* God, like a wise and affectionate Father, will only give us those things which are good and profitable for us; and those he will not refuse us. † *If ye being evil, says our Saviour, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?* And what are these good things? Are they the good things of *this life*? These indeed are at his disposal, and he does many times bestow them upon those that ask him; but not always. St. Luke acquaints us what that good thing is, which God will not deny to those who ask it of him, and that is the grace and assistance of his holy Spirit, to make those good who desire to be so; ‡ *How much more shall your heavenly Fa-*

\* Prov. ii. 3, 4, 5.

† Matth. vii. 11.

‡ Luke xi. 13.

*ther give the holy Spirit to those that ask him?* For so this \* Evangelist relates that passage. Men may indeed render themselves incapable of this gift, and so be rejected when they pray for it; but God deals thus only with obstinate and rebellious sinners, who by a long habitual course of gross and wilful sin, have so far † quenched the Spirit, that it will never again kindle in their hearts; and in judgment he rejects their prayer, because they have all their lives rejected the tenders of his grace and mercy, and their repentance now is probably not sincere; but they are frightened into it by the near approach of death, and thoughts of hell, and stings of an upbraiding conscience, which foretels their doom. It is the † *proud* only whom God *resists*, the men who either scornfully despise religion, or think they have enough of it already: But still *he gives more grace to the humble*, to such as are sensible of their own infirmities, delight in virtue, and long to be what God would have them. If therefore you have not out-sinned the grace of God by a long and obstinate resistance; if you are desirous yet to be reconciled to God, and to return into the way of righteousness, and will endeavour heartily to \* *bring forth fruits meet for repentance*, try whether God will not accept you. Encounter that lust which is the strongest, which has hitherto led you captive upon all occasions; watch that temptation which does the most easily prevail upon you, and see whether it be not possible (through that grace of God which you may have for asking) to withstand it first, and after to subdue it. Be assured that God will never deny you the assistance of his Spirit, if you pray for it heartily, and improve it vigorously. *He therefore that hungers and thirsts after righteousness*

\* Matth. vii. 21, 22, 23, &amp;c.

† 1 Thess. v. 19.

‡ Jam. iv. 6.

\* Luke iii. 8.



*ness* (understanding by it his own sanctification and improvement) *shall be filled*, shall certainly obtain what he desires, in all *necessary* measures at least, even in this present life. And,

*SECONDLY*, Extending this desire to others as well as to our selves; to the promoting piety and virtue, the fear of God, and practice of religion in our families; neighbourhood, or elsewhere, by all those charitable methods mentioned towards the conclusion of the first general head of this discourse; where we describ'd that branch of hungry and thirsting after righteousness, we have good reason to hope for such a blessing of God upon it, that we may *see the travel of our souls, and be satisfied*; may see it do *some good* at least, tho' not so much as we desire; and that at length we may meet with many souls in glory, who will bless God for making us the happy instruments of rescuing them from their sins, and bringing them to heaven. But this I shall not enlarge upon, because the *event* is not so sure as the *reward of our labours* in it, and the *piety of our desires* are: For they may reject the means of grace, tho' we may offer them, and be rewarded for our good endeavours. But farther,

(2.) THOSE that hunger and thirst after righteousness *shall be filled*, and in being so be blessed; they shall find a *comfortable relish and satisfaction* in what they do obtain. They shall not only get what they desire, but they shall be satisfied with what they get. It is the vanity of all the blessings of this life, that tho' enjoyed they do not answer expectation; they fall short of what we thought 'em, and leave us still uneasy: For as they are only perishing enjoyments of this world, they cannot in the very nature of them satisfy the hunger and thirst of an immortal soul; in the taste and relish of them they are embitter'd with many unpleasant mixtures of trouble in one kind or other, and in the possession

sion of them uncertain things, of which an hundred accidents may deprive us, and therefore we cannot have an absolute contentment in them. But he who hungers and thirsts after righteousness, as he *always obtains*, so he obtains what is *well worth his labour*. Every grace he obtains, and every sinful inclination he subdues, is no less than a new conveyance to him of eternal glory, a new assurance of his right and title; and this being what his very soul was made for, must be entirely agreeable to all his faculties, and thoroughly satisfying. The more he advances in the way of righteousness, the more he is refreshed; the farther he travels, he is the less weary: The pursuit may be oft difficult, but the reflection is pleasant. God has so fitted religion to the minds of men, that tho' there be labour in the undertaking, there is always a relish goes along with it. The conquering of an evil habit, or a strong temptation, is like the conquering of a powerful enemy; difficult to perform, but when accomplish'd fills us with mighty joy and triumph. Nor is it less delightful to do good, than it is to resist and conquer evil. What a refreshment is it to the charitable man to help the afflicted? His alms is not so acceptable to the poor creature he relieves, as the religion of it is to himself. But his satisfaction is then at the highest, when he sees religion flourishing abroad, the kingdom of Christ gaining ground, impiety and vice put out of countenance, and the slaves of satan rescu'd into the glorious liberty of the sons of God: When he discerns the characters of goodness and virtue in his children, for whom he has so long pray'd, and on whom he has bestow'd so much pious pains to instruct them in the ways of virtue; and when he sees the neighbourhood, or any soul in it, effectually reform'd and taught by his example, friendship, influence, reproofs, or charity, it gives

gives him something of that holy joy on earth, which angels have in heaven; where they are said to *rejoice* over the repenting sinner.

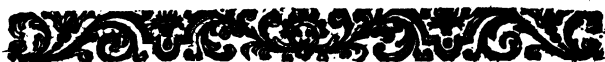
(3.) AND lastly, to compleat the blessing; this hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled with an *everlasting* fulness in the world to come: for here the appetite of the soul is rather refreshed than filled: the righteousness of the present life is but imperfect, and he who loves it best, and labours most after it, will still be sensible of many defects and failures in it, and these are no little abatement of his satisfaction. He observes also, beside his own deficiency, so much unrighteousness abroad; so great a neglect of the religion of Christ, even amongst Christians; so many dishonours done to our holy Master, by those who profess to follow him, and to be his servants, that the good man is still more uneasy upon a publick account. For as his desires after righteousness are not restrained to his own private and personal case, but enlarge themselves to the increase and propagation of righteousness in the world; so if he live in an age in which the righteousness of the Gospel is not only neglected, but ridiculed and laughed at, and the religion of Christ, in the power and practice of it, like himself, condemned and crucified, he cannot but be under great disturbance and concern, notwithstanding the comfort of his own sincerity. But when that happy time shall come, when he shall *enter into the joy of his Lord, amongst the spirits of just men made perfect*, not only his own righteousness, which here is in its infancy, weak and expos'd, in a state of warfare, surrounded with many enemies, attack'd, and sometimes worsted, by many temptations, shall be advanced to a full strength and perfection, be placed in an entire security, and rewarded with eternal glory; but he shall see the *righteousness of all good people* likewise perfected;

perfected ; he shall see an universal righteousness, and that in its full lustre and beauty, in an innumerable company of unfinning angels, triumphant martyrs, and compleated saints. There his satisfaction shall not drop upon him in small showers, which serve to refresh him only for a time, but he shall drink out of *rivers of pleasure* at the right hand of God. There shall be nothing there to tempt or to offend the righteous, \* their victory over sin shall be absolute, their triumph everlasting. They shall *indeed be filled with righteousness*; for there every man shall be filled according to his measure; and though there be different proportions; there will be no imperfection. And thus it shall continue, as long as the Sun of righteousness endures; for they who shall be thought worthy to meet the Lord Jesus in his kingdom of glory, † *shall remain for ever with him.*

\* Matth. xiii. 41.

† 1 Thes. iv. 17.





## C H A P. V.

## Of M E R C Y.



M A T T H. V. 7.

*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.*



HAVING gone through the four first Beattitudes, we come now to the *fifth*, and shall consider it in the same method, the text falling into the same general division, *viz.* The *persons* described by their moral character, [the merciful,] and that correspondent  *blessing* pronounced upon them as their reward, the assurance of obtaining mercy for themselves.

I. *FIRST*, For the consideration of the *persons*, and these are the *merciful*: and in order to know what is included in that character, we must consider the proper objects of mercy, (which may be reduc'd to three, the *miserable* or *unfortunate*, the *injuriously*, and the *guilty*;) together with those acts of mercy which are suitable to their respective cases, and ought to be shewn towards them.

(1.) To begin with the miserable, or unfortunate; whatever the circumstances are which make them so, the instances of mercy towards them are as follows.

I. THE

I. THE being inwardly affected with *pity* and *commiseration* of them. Humanity it self requires this tenderness, 'tis wrought into the very frame of our natures, and none but savage, ignoble, and disingenuous spirits can be without it. The sense and interest of the common condition of mankind excites it, exposed (as all of us are) to pain and sickness, and unhappy accidents, to poverty and contempt, to losses and disappointments, and to whatever else we see our neighbours suffer; and though at present all is easy with us, we know not how soon their case may be our own; and therefore should commiserate *them*, as we would have others pity *us* upon a like occasion. 'Tis very fitly urged upon us to this purpose, by the author to the *Hebrews*, \* *Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being your selves also in the body.* And certainly 'tis a very great argument of the goodness of God to us, that though he would not take away the consequence of sin, the calamities and afflictions of this mortal life, lest we should forget his justice, and our own demerits; yet he was pleased so far to pity us, as to imprint upon our nature this generous, this divine impression of his own, that we might not be without some comfort *one from another*, (as well as from his gracious promises and our eternal hopes) to qualify and mitigate our sorrows. For this experience teaches us, that if the sufferer meet but with a compassionate ear, that gives attention to his story, it is a mighty easement to his mind, it takes off half his burden, he is but half unhappy. St. Paul therefore, to strengthen the obligations of nature by those of religion, requires us † *to weep with those that weep; † to be kind to one another, tender-hearted; † and to*

\* Heb. xiii. 3.

† Rom. xii. 15.

† Eph. iv. 32.

† Col. iii. 12.

put on, as the elect of God, bowels of mercy. And God, to give us an example of it, in the case of Israel, was pleased to express himself with this affectionate tenderness, *\*Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord.* And according to this, the Prophet *Isaiah*, in the name of the captivity, addresses himself to God. *†Where is thy zeal and thy strength, the sounding of thy bowels, and thy mercy towards me?* Our Saviour also fully expressed this disposition in himself, when taking a prospect of *Jerusalem*, then indeed in prosperity, but (as he foresaw the judgments hastening down upon it) ready to be devour'd and laid waste by the destroying *Romans*, he fell into a sudden weeping, and cried out over it, *‡If thou hadst known (or, oh that thou hadst known) the things that belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.* This, therefore, is a very natural and necessary expression of mercy to those who are in an afflicted state, let their suffering be what it will; and 'tis indeed the least we can do for them. Pity, without any thing more, is but a cheap relief, a charity which costs us nothing; and though it be of great use toward the comfort of the unhappy sufferer, yet in most cases 'tis far from being the whole extent of mercy due to them, For,

2. WE must add the more substantial benefit of *assistance* and *support*, according as the nature of the affliction requires. If pain or sickness be the case, and we know any thing which may give them ease, or contribute to restore their health, we ought to acquaint them, or supply them with it.

\* Jer. xxxi. 20.

† Isai. lxiii. 15.

‡ Luke xix. 42.

If a sudden accident have happened to them, as to the traveller mentioned in the Gospel, who was robbed, and stripped, and wounded; we, like the good \* *Samaritan*, should readily give all the help we can, that they may be provided for, and taken care of. If a man's reputation be unjustly blasted, if a worthy and a virtuous person should be undeservedly contemned and vilified, we should not only pity him, but labour also to vindicate his character, and set him right in the esteem of the world, so far as we are able. And the like we are to do proportionably in other cases; and especially in that most common one of *want* or *poverty*. St. *James* has an excellent passage to this purpose, † *If a brother, or sister, be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say to them, depart in peace, be you warmed and filled; notwithstanding you give them not those things which are needful to the body, what does it profit?* The Apostle here supposes pity, or a compassionate sense of their suffering, but shews that *that alone is not enough*; there must be a charity more substantial, an actual and real supply, so far as our own circumstances will permit. I shall therefore explain the assistance or support to such as are under poverty, in these particulars.

The first is *giving*: and thus the divine mercy deals with *us*; it does not rest in the bare language of affection or commiseration, but issues in the bestowing something suitable to our present necessity. And that we may be convinced how great an obligation lies upon us to this charity towards our suffering fellow Christians, we ought to consider our selves as only ‡ *stewards* under God, in all which we enjoy. Our estates are committed to us by him, the Sovereign Lord of all things, to employ them to

\* Luke x. 30, 38.

† Jam. ii. 15, 16.

‡ Matth. xxv. 14.



our own subsistence, and that of those who immediately depend upon us, in the first place; the remainder as he shall otherwise direct us. And what direction has he given in this matter? He has, in innumerable places of Holy Scripture, as it were *drawn bills upon us for the poor*. He has undertaken to provide for such as are in want; but how? Not by raining down upon them bread from heaven, or by miraculous flights of quails, as he fed the *Israelites* in the wilderness; not by as great a miracle upon their garments, that they should not decay or wear out, as he did to that people there; but by reserving and requiring portions from the rich, out of what he has put into their hands, for the use and maintenance of the poor. And therefore St. Paul bids *Timothy*, *Charge them that are rich in this world, that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate*.

*SECONDLY*, Another particular included in the words assistance and support, is *lending*; an instance of mercy more to be considered than it usually is; for I do not here mean the lending *for increase*, but *in charity*: not for our own profit, but the seasonable advantage and supply of such as stand in need. This charitable lending, as wholly abstracted from self-interest, is also required of us by our Saviour, as an *act of mercy*, *Do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again*; and then it follows, in the next verse, *Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father is merciful*. The meaning of the precept here, *to lend, hoping for nothing again*, seems to be plainly and naturally this; that where a person, under the pressure of great necessity and want, shall come to us, and desire to borrow such a sum of money as his present circumstances require, (provided we can spare it, and if the providence of God should render the person unable to repay us, can well enough

enough bear the loss of it,) we ought not to refuse such a seasonable charity as this, or be afraid of lending, because of the probable hazard we run of never being paid again; but that, on the contrary, we should freely and cheerfully supply him, with a resolution to lose it, if God should disable the person to whom we lend, so as that he cannot without the utmost inconvenience repay us. But that this may not encourage idle and disorderly borrowing, St. Paul inserts a caution proper to be taken notice of, \* *Owe no man any thing, but to love one another*; which I take to be as much a restraint of careless and inconsiderate borrowing, as the other precept is of unmerciful denying.

A *third* particular of mercy, which is near of kin to that which went before, and equally imply'd in the assistance and support due to such as are really poor, is the voluntary *release* and *quittance* of such payments as cannot be expected, but by severities which must entirely ruin the poor debtor. Those who have the power of exercising this instance of mercy, are to proceed by the rules of *necessity*, rather than of *contract*. And that it is required of us, upon such occasions, we may reasonably infer from the parable of the † *unmerciful servant*, who when his lord had frankly remitted to him a debt, which he was by no means able to pay, laid hold of his poor fellow servant, who owed him, indeed, a trifling sum, but was as little able to discharge it, as the other his ten thousand talents; and, notwithstanding all submissions and entreaties, barbarously cast him into prison for it. At which unworthy proceeding, his lord (by whom Almighty God is represented to us in the parable) revok'd the remission of what that cruel wretch had stood indebted in, and reproaching

\* Rom. xiii. 8.

† Matth. xviii. 24, &amp;c.

him with these words, *O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me; shouldst thou not also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity upon thee?* He dealt accordingly with him, and cast him into prison, 'till he should pay all which was due to him. It were well if this part of mercy also were more in practice amongst Christians; for surely 'tis a scandal to us, that our prisons are every where so filled with miserable debtors, who want not the *will*, (but through mere poverty and misfortunes) the *ability* to discharge the debt, while their families, in the mean time, are forced to beg or starve. I question not, our laws design'd imprisonment as a punishment for *knavery*, and not for *poverty*; this latter being in it self no crime; and therefore, tho' indeed the laws have not provided for this case by any exception, it cannot but be very hard and barbarous, to throw men into goal for what they *would*, but *cannot* pay; a debt which they have not contracted with any knavish intention, or disabled themselves for the payment of it by vice and extravagance. What good does the possession and confinement of a *debtor's body*, who is in such circumstances that his creditor cannot be repaid, tho' the prisoner ever so much desire it? Nay farther, does not such a confinement still the more disable him from paying? For supposing an honest intention, (and a Christian should always be ready to believe and hope the best of his neighbour,) if he were at liberty, and time were given him, he might by his labour and industry, be paying off the debt by little and little: But under imprisonment he can do nothing but get a bare subsistence, and very often not that, without the charity of others: So that if the creditor can hope to be repaid at all by such a man, it must be somewhere else than in a goal. And if the debt be such, that even *in liberty* the

the poor creature is not likely to be able to discharge it, religion will teach us what to do, *be merciful and forgive the whole.*

A fourth particular of assistance is *helping the fatherless and oppressed to their right*, so far as it lies in our power to forward it: And this may be done (\* as a magistrate having the proper cognizance of the cause,) by doing them justice in the course of law; as a private man and a neighbour, by intercession, advice, and several other methods which a truly charitable mind will easily think of upon occasion, and as readily apply on the other hand. Solomon warns us, † *If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain;* (the reason is the same with respect to any other injury or oppression, by the violence of lawless men:) *If thou sayest, behold we knew it not,* (excuse an uncompassionate carelessness by a pretended ignorance,) *doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? And he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? And shall not he render to every man according to his works?*

BUT to proceed; we must not only pity and assist the miserable, we must also,

3. *P R A Y for them.* Assistance is not always in our power to give them; but whether it happen to be so or not, we may still recommend them heartily in our prayers to God, who is the fountain and the spring of all supply, beseeching *him* that he would give them such assistance and relief as is suitable to their condition. For *∴ he is the Father of mercies, the God of all comfort; † he is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. \* He is their refuge and strength, a very present help in*

\* Psal. lxxxii. 3. Isa. i. 17. Job xxix 11, 12, 13. Jer. xxii. 3. † Prov. xxiv. 11, 12. ∴ 2 Cor. i. 3.

† Psal. cxlv. 9. \* Psal. xlv. 1.

*trouble: ;, A Father of the fatherless, a Judge of the widows; † he shall deliver the poor and needy, and him that hath no helper. Tho' we are unable to help them, God is not, and therefore it is a very proper act of mercy in us, to represent their case to him, and ply the throne of mercy on their behalf. And this we have fair encouragement to do, both from what these texts assure us of his ready and merciful disposition to relieve his suffering creatures, and from the assurance given us by St. James, that \* the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much; and that, as appears by the context, is particularly declared to us in the case of praying for others under affliction. It is also more extensive than our actual pity and relief can possibly be; for these can only reach those whole particular troubles we see or hear of; but our prayers may extend to all who are in storms or shipwrecks; all who are sick or in pain, oppressed or captives, and in general to all who are under any affliction, tho' we know not, nor ever are like to know their persons. And this is an act of mercy to them, which whether it avail the sufferers or not, will certainly be rewarded in us by our heavenly Father.*

(2.) I come now to the second sort of objects of our mercy; the injurious, and such as have done us wrong. And with respect to these our merciful temper is to shew it self;

1. IN pardon and forgiveness, abstaining from all attempts and projects of revenge, in imitation of that God, who chose out this as the character by which he most affected to be known and worshipped. ∴ *The Lord, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, forgiv-*

;, Psal. lxxviii. 5.

† Psal. lxxii. 12.

\* Jam. v. 16.

∴ Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.

*ing iniquity, transgression and sin.* If he who is every day provoked by the prophane contempt, the repeated blasphemies and impieties of wicked men, (those wretched and despicable creatures spurning at the infinite Majesty of their Creator, who could make them miserable for it beyond all expression, with one angry look) will nevertheless bear long with them, and takes more delight in forgiving, than even the most malicious of them do in offending; how much more reason is there that *we* should bear with *one another*, who are all of us form'd out of the same clay, and subject to the same infirmities and passions, and for our many offences against God, deserve not only *his* wrath, but the enmity of the *whole creation* against us! But the *reasonableness* of our forgiving one another is not all: Our Saviour has made it *necessary* for us so to do, as ever we expect forgiveness at his hands, which he has taught us to pray for only upon that express condition: For so the petition runs in the Lord's prayer, \* *Forgive us our debts* [our trespasses or offences] *as we forgive our debtors* [those who offend or injure us.] We must desire to be forgiven, only in like manner as we forgive: So that whoever pretends to ask pardon for himself of God, with malice in his heart against his neighbour, does in *effect* (whatever his words may import to the contrary) desire that he *may not be forgiven*, because he will not forgive others. But that the forgiveness here urged upon us may be indeed the indication of a merciful temper, it must be *voluntary*, from an inward, free and generous principle in the forgiver; for so much as a man is pressed and constrained by exterior circumstances, the importunities of friends, or the deep submissions and entreaties of the offender, so much is detracted from the honour and va-

\* Matth. vi. 12.

lue of the action: Nor does it obtain the end of forgiveness, which is reconciliation; for a compliance so extorted from us may be false and so revokable, and then it is no more than a slow and disguised malice; resentment smother'd up a while in embers, to kindle a fresh flame hereafter, when opportunity or some new incentive shall encourage it, which is wholly inconsistent with true forgiveness. It must be \* *sincere* and *faithful*, not like the pretended reconciliation of *Jacob's* family with the *Sichemites*, waiting only an advantage for a more effectual and irresistible revenge. There must be a perfect discharge, without any thoughts of revenge or retaliation hereafter for the injury then supposed to be forgiven. But the *second*, and the larger step in mercy to those who injure us, is still behind, *viz.*

2. THE *doing all good and beneficial offices* to them, how great soever the mischief or injustice is which they have done us. This is expressly the law of Christ deliver'd with his own mouth. † *Ye have heard* (says he) *that it has been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy: but I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.* Nature and self-interest teach us to be kind to those who are kind to us, but the Christian must go farther than nature and self-interest will lead him; he must do *more than others*, he must return *good offices* to those who do him *ill ones*, and that good in particular which is most contrary to the evil he has suffered. And this in imitation also of the most perfect mercy and beneficence of God, ‡ *who is kind to the unthankful and the evil; \* makes his sun to rise*

\* Gen. xxxiv. 13, &c.

† Matth. v. 43, 44.

‡ Luke vi. 35.

\* Matth. v. 45.

*on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.* He is daily pouring out his benefits and blessings upon those who are daily provoking him, and even while the whole race of mankind were in open rebellion against him, sent his Son from heaven to die upon the cross a sacrifice and satisfaction for them. From which St. *John* rationally draws this inference, \* *If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.*

(3.) THERE is yet a third branch of mercy which has not been considered here, and can be now but very briefly. It is that which the prince, or his subordinate judges and magistrates, would think proper to shew, in moderation of the severity of human laws. The objects of this mercy are the *guilty*, such as have broke the laws, and are fallen under the judicial cognizance of them thereupon. The supreme power in all governments has an undoubted right of *pardon*ing offenders after conviction, and in the case of pitiable circumstances, where the offence is not of very dangerous consequence, or where other good considerations of equity, mercy, or state policy intervene not, may very commendably be exerted. Inferior judges and magistrates have not such a power indeed, for they must do their office in the execution of the laws committed to them. And yet even they also in some less cases have a discretionary latitude allowed them, provided that in general the laws which they are sworn to execute be faithfully and impartially put in execution, so that vice and ill manners may receive a due and publick discountenance. For I account it no partiality in a magistrate to pass by the legal punishment of a young or unaccustomed offender, and to try whether the *warning* given him by his first conviction, may not as well reclaim him

\* 1 John iv. 11.



as a *penalty*. There are other mollifying circumstances which may give a title to mercy now and then; but I cannot stay to determine nicely upon them, and therefore only recommend this maxim, *That conscience and mercy act by one another*; that neither an inflexible severity prevail without any distinction, (provided the end of the law may otherwise be duly answered) nor yet a careless and unfaithful negligence or indiscreet good-nature destroy the bonds of government. For the magistrate is ordained of God, \* *a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil*; and in many cases punishment is the most proper mercy for him to express, as it may reclaim the offender, who will not be wrought upon by gentler methods, and may prevent or restrain others by his example.

Thus we have gone through the *First* general head, the description of the persons blessed [the *merciful*.] We are next to undertake the *second*, and that is,

II. THE blessing which attends upon them, [*They shall obtain mercy*.]

THAT we may rightly understand the nature of this promised blessing, we are to take it along with us, that tho' mercies of a *temporal* as well as a *spiritual* nature may be included in it, the *present life* is not the *only* nor the *principal* stage of the divine mercy: For the curse of death being denounced upon the whole posterity of *Adam*, and this curse containing within the bowels of it all the various evils and calamities to which our present state of being is obnoxious, the *wisdom* of God has not thought fit to exempt even his † best and most faithful servants entirely from *these scourges*, though his *mercy* has provided a way to remove and set

\* Rom. xiii. 3, 4.

† Heb. xii. 6, 7.

aside their *guilt*. The paradise and perfect happiness of good men being reserved to a future and a better life, less care is taken for distinguishing communications of divine favour while we continue in this world; where, generally speaking, \* *All things come alike to all, and there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked*. And that we might not flatter our selves with an expectation, that under the Gospel-state the case of good men should be alter'd for the better, as to outward prosperity and comfort, our Lord foretold his Disciples that they should suffer hardships and indignities in great abundance; that they must not depend upon a life of ease, and wealth, and reputation, but should be exposed to sharp and cruel persecutions, to the loss of all things, and to death it self. And experience shews us daily, that the best of Christians are no more exempted from pain or sickness, poverty, reproach, or any other the common miseries of life, than the most impious and ungodly are. Their treasure is above, and there it is, before the seat of mercy it self, the throne of the divine presence in heaven, that the rewards of mercy are chiefly distributed.

YET is not *this present life* shut out from some degrees of such a distribution; and therefore we may still maintain that more or less in *this world*, as well as *that to come*, the merciful *shall obtain mercy*. We will consider the blessing.

*FIRST*, So far as it is observable *in the present life*. And here it would be in vain to insist on the common benefits and blessings enjoy'd, in a greater or less degree, by all mankind, as health, friends, subsistence, the fruits of the earth, &c. (though these are really mercies, and only lose their character with us, by that which should most endear and

\* Eccl. ix. 2.

recommēd to us the divine favour in them, their frequency and repetition :) For they are alike poured out upon all sorts of men, the merciful and unmerciful, the good and evil, without distinction. But we shall endeavour to shew, that in some particulars the merciful are *eminently* and *especially* regarded. And yet we must previously observe, that as the several acts of human mercy to be rewarded, are not all of them in the same degree excellent and honourable, but some of them are more so than others; as for instance, in the case of relieving miserable persons; every lender, and every giver, and every man who puts up a prayer, or joins in the petitions of the Church, for needy and afflicted people, is not alike merciful with others who proceed farther, lend more generously, give more liberally, pray more frequently; nor even these last to be compared to those who go farther still, to the forgiving, and doing good to their enemies, which are the brightest exercises of this grace — So it is not to be expected that the *rewards* of their mercy should be equal. It is enough to secure the promise in this case, if God give any thing proportionable to the mercy shewn by men to one another; for so the merciful *do obtain mercy*. And therefore let it be consider'd, that the distributions of heaven, though they be full of mercy, are not equally the same to all persons. Respect is had, not only to *single acts*, or *habits* of charity, but also the *eminence* or *usefulness* of each of these. He whose *constant disposition* it is to be kind, compassionate and assisting, or to forgive, and to do good to his enemies, is much more valuable in the sight of God, than he who once or twice, perhaps, in all his life, attains to the honour and practice of this temper. *Forgiveness* is more than giving of alms, and *doing good to an enemy* more than lending to a necessitous neighbour; and proportionable

to this, 'tis probable, the reward may be. These things being premis'd, we may go on to observe, that as Almighty God, in the execution of his judgments, frequently inscribes the sin so legibly upon the punishment, that men may easily discern by the affliction it self, for what particular sin they are afflicted; so he does usually confer his mercies and rewards in so proportionable and resembling a manner, as to point out the particular virtue, for which the blessing is conferred. Examples we have in these Beatitudes; to the *poor in spirit*, is assign'd a *kingdom*; to the religious *mourners*, *comfort*; to such as *hunger and thirst after righteousness*, *filling*, or satisfaction; and here to the *merciful*, the *obtaining mercy*. But what that mercy is, which (with respect to *this world*) they shall obtain, or generally do so in the course of God's Providence, may be briefly summ'd up thus. The \* *compassionate* shall find it in the divine compassion to themselves, supporting and comforting them under their afflictions, by his holy Spirit, and in due time delivering them, when it may be for his glory, and their real good. To this we may add the compassion which such, when they are in trouble, generally find towards them in their neighbours, who are always apt to pity those who have pity'd them, or others. The † *charitable* man who *gives and lends*, or *freely releases* his demands upon *insolvent debtors*, is generally blest'd by Providence, with a remarkable plenty and increase in his estate, or prosperity and success in his affairs. He who is frequently and earnestly *petitioning at the throne of mercy* for the miserable and afflicted, may reasonably hope to be heard and accepted, when he shall pray

\* Psal. xli. 1, 2, 3. Prov. xxi. 13. † Psal. xxxvii. 25, 26. Prov. xi. 24, 25. Luke vi. 28. 2 Cor. ix. 8, 9, 10. Prov. xxviii. 27.

for himself, in troubles of his own. He who *forgives*, and *does good to his enemies*, may often observe that God either *breaks* or *over-rules* their malice; either pours out a spirit of reconciliation and friendship upon them, † or restrains them, at least, from doing all those ill offices, to which their inclination prompts them. Now these particulars (which a careful regard to Providence, and the administration of the divine government in the world, will find to be generally true *in fact*, and the common issue of things) are all of them such apposite and resembling rewards, that one may easily perceive the virtue to which they belong. But the obtaining mercy, in the most full and proper sense of it, is still behind: I mean,

(2.) THAT mercy which the merciful shall obtain of God, when they are called up to *another world*, or in order to their being happy there. I add this last clause, because the pardon of our sins, and the acceptance we have with God, through Christ, (which is the foundation of our future happiness,) is begun in this life, when true repentance has prepared us for it; (for so St. Paul speaks of himself, \* *I obtained mercy*, i. e. the forgiveness of my former blasphemy, and persecuting the Church of Christ, *because I did it ignorantly in unbelief*;) though it be not judicially declared and perfected, 'till we appear at the bar of God, and enter upon *the life to come*. I chuse therefore to speak of it under this head, as the effect of it is not till after death, when we come to be acquitted in due form by Christ, at the day of judgment; and so I understand St. Paul, when he prays for the charitable Onesiphorus, that † *he may find mercy of the Lord in that day*. Now this great instance of obtaining

† Rom. xii. 20. Prov. xvi. 7. Psal. lxxvi. 10.

\* 1 Tim. i. 13, 16.

† 2 Tim. i. 18.

mercy, the *pardon and forgiveness of our sins*, we find more especially and expressly promis'd, as the reward of that branch of mercy in a Christian, the forgiveness of the wrongs and injuries done to him by others: \* *For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.* And, † *When ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any, that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.* Not that the forgiving others will, without more ado, entitle us to forgiveness, for by the whole tenor of the New Testament, 'tis plain there must be also true repentance, and the practice of all other virtues required of us in the Gospel, without which, we shall certainly fail, nevertheless, of pardon and salvation; but forgiveness is promis'd peculiarly to him, who from his heart forgives his brother, because he who obeys this command in hopes of pardon, will by the same motive be induced to obey the rest of God's commands, which are necessary for the obtaining forgiveness of sins. And the negative holds always and absolutely true, that let our other virtues be as great and as many as they will, if we ‡ *do not forgive, we shall not be forgiven.*

I must add, that notwithstanding the immediate connexion betwixt the grace of forgiving others, and the reward for it, of being our selves forgiven, mercy is such a general word, that considering it as a christian virtue, it must not be restrained to that one branch, the forgiving and doing good to enemies, but extends also to all the other parts and instances of mercy; and considering it as a reward, it implies not only pardon and forgiveness, but all the consequents thereof, that immense variety of happiness, that eternal spring of glory and delights,

\* Matth. vi. 14. † Mark xi. 25. ‡ Matth. vi. 15.

— xviii. 35. Mark xi. 26.

which shall be the portion of all pardoned souls in heaven. And though no good thing we do can *deserve* this pardon, and the exceeding great reward which follows thereupon; yet to the merciful, as such, if they are so on the score of conscience and the command of God, belongs this *valuable promise*, in whatever way they express that excellent temper, on which the blessing is entail'd.



## C H A P. VI.

## Of PURITY of HEART.

M A T T H. V. 8.

*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*



HIS is the *sixth* in order, of the Beatitudes, and contains in it a farther character of that disposition or temper of mind, which is required under the state of the Gospel; together with an encouragement or reward propounded. The disposition is *purity of heart*; the encouragement thereto, a promise of the *sight of God*. We will *first*, therefore, consider the meaning and extent of this disposition, and *then* the blessing pronounc'd upon it.

I. FIRST,

I. *FIRST*, For the extent and meaning of this *purity of heart* recommended to us in the text. And for the explaining of this, I shall follow the observation which expositors have made in the case, that things are commonly said to be pure in two respects; (1.) As they are simple, unmix'd, and uncompounded with any other substance; and (2.) As they are unstain'd and free from any pollution or defilement, of which they may be capable. Now this being apply'd to the heart, will give occasion to a double argument of discourse; (1.) Concerning sincerity and simplicity, opposed to mixture and composition; (2.) Concerning purity, properly so called, as opposite to pollution or defilement.

*FIRST* then, The pure in heart are the *sincere* and *honest*, such as have but one heart and one appearance, exercising an undivided affection, an undissembled integrity; opposed to those \**double-minded men* St. James speaks of, who are *unstable in all their ways*, and whom he calls upon to †*purify their hearts*. And this disposition being respectively to be exercised both towards God, and towards Man, let us take a view of it in relation to both.

I. In relation to God; and as such,

(1.) *THIS* purity of heart restrains us to the acknowledgment and worship of *one God only*, and forbids *idolatry*; for ‡ *what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial?* || *The Lord our God is one Lord, and we ought to love him with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our might. ∴ His glory he will not give to another, nor his praise to graven images.* Now that this may not seem a needless

\* Jam. i. 8.

† Deut. vi. 4.

† Jam. iv. 8.

∴ Isai. xlii. 8.

‡ 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15.



and an useless Topic to insist upon with Christians, who all profess *to worship one God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent*, it will be requisite to take notice that whatever that object or enjoyment is, which we inordinately set our hearts upon, and so unreasonably affect, that we will rather break through the obedience we owe to God, than cross our appetite and desire of it, that thing, whatever it is, is an idol, and another God to us, and our disorderly affection to it is idolatry. Thus St. Paul has expressly taught us, in the case of two great vices, covetousness and luxury. Of the first of these, the too eager desire and love of money, in that passage, \* *Mortify therefore your members which are on the earth, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry.* And elsewhere he calls † *the covetous man an idolater.* Of luxury or intemperance, excess in eating and drinking, the same Apostle gives the same character; ‡ *For many walk, of whom I told you often, and now tell you even weeping, whose God is their belly, whose glory is their shame, who mind earthly things.* The covetous man regards not the service of God so much as the increase of his riches; he puts his trust in his money, and acknowledges no other Providence than his own; considers it as his only treasure, his only happiness and safeguard, and therefore in truth it is his only God; or if he do sometimes, for fashion sake, present himself amongst the worshippers of the true God, his heart is still upon his money, and 'tis to this he pays his best and most intense devotion. The *luxurious* and *intemperate* do the same by *pleasure*, as the other does by riches; their sensual appetites entirely govern them; the indulgence of *these* is all the heaven they know or care for; the laws of God (and very often the

\* Col. iii. 5.

† Eph. v. 5.

‡ Phil. iii. 18, 19.

time which should be spent in the publick worship of him) are sacrificed to *them*. So that these men are also double-dealers with their Maker, whom outwardly they pretend to own; their appetites are gods to them as well as he, and much more honour'd and obey'd. If therefore that be true, as certainly it is, which Christ has told us, that \* *we cannot serve God and mammon*; and that of the Apostle, † *to whom we yield our selves servants to obey, his servants we are to whom we obey*; it must necessarily follow, that so much as we withdraw from the faithful service of God, and give to any other object; so much we are guilty of setting up to our selves an idol or false deity, notwithstanding all our pretences to be the servants of the true God; than which there cannot be a greater offence against the faithfulness or simplicity of heart, described under the first general article.

(2.) THE same simplicity of heart, requires not only that we should *worship God alone*, but also that we should *worship him in the way of his own appointment*; not affecting innovations and will-worship in his service, which neither divine precept, the example of the primitive Christians, or the standing order, custom, or direction of the Church, (the governors of which have authority from God to appoint the outward circumstances of religion, as may be most to decency and edification) have prescribed. And it requires also that we should present to him the entire and uniform service of all our faculties, the humble posture of our bodies, as well as the sincere devotion of our souls, in our addresses to him, or attendance upon him. For we read of Christ himself, that he \* *kneeled down and prayed*; and the same is recorded of † St. Stephen also,

\* Matth. vi. 24. † Rom. vi. 16. \* Luke xx. 41. † Acts vii. 60.

and † *St. Paul*, and the christian congregation with him.

BUT farther,

(3.) THIS simplicity or purity of heart is opposite to all *hypocrisy* and *dissimulation* with God. Hypocrisy in the service of God is either *voluntary* and *study'd*, of which it is to be fear'd there are too many guilty; or it is *involuntary*, proceeding from ignorance or carelessness, or the want of principles and an inward sense of things; of which they may be truly said to be guilty, who by their resort to publick offices, by their presence at the prayers, and praises, and instructions of the Church, and by their outward gesture and conforming appearance do seem to worship God, but yet in truth and reality have no inward sense of what is done, nor any care and conscience to understand it. Their minds are upon the world, upon their secular business or diversions, and it may be worse, projecting for their lusts and vices, while they pretend to be worshipping God; who sees into the inmost corners of their hearts, and first or last will make them know *he is not to be thus mocked*. We ought not therefore to deceive our selves with the vain conceit of imposing upon *him*; but whether we are in publick or in private devotion, attend closely and seriously to what we are then about; to desire inwardly what we pretend in words to pray for; to exercise real repentance in the confession of sin; to believe, when we recite the creed; to bless God from the bottom of our hearts, when we sing or repeat the psalms or other offices of praise; to attend with a sincere aim of being improved and edify'd in christian practice, when we read or hear the holy Scriptures, sermons and good books; or

† Acts xx. 36. Acts xxi. 5.

else we perform a vain, hypocritical and formal service, which can never please God, or forward our own salvation. But this sincerity is not confin'd only to acts of devotion, either at Church or any where else; it must extend to our whole conduct in religion, at all times, in all places, and in all particulars. We must not only carry a fair outside to the world, as if we affected no more than the *reputation* of being good and virtuous, or put on the *form* of godliness to serve our *little turns* and *interests* in the world; for such hypocrites are very often discover'd even in this world, and shall certainly be so with everlasting shame and disgrace in that which is to come; but we must be *real* and *ingenuous* in a matter of so great concern; we must obey God with an integrity of *heart*, as well as plausible behaviour. We must \* *have respect to all God's commandments*; endeavour to mortifie our *secret pride* and lust, our envy, censoriousness, peevishness and sensual appetites, which are either invisible to the world, and wholly lodg'd within us, or are little take notice of, and do not expose our credit amongst men; as well as abstain from notorious lewdness, drunkenness, swearing and cursing, violence or knavery, and the like; which betray an *outward* contempt of religion, and carry disgrace along with them. We must not pretend to *compound* with God and virtue, retaining our most agreeable and beloved sins, and shaking off the rest; nor must we content our selves with tithing *Mint, Anise and Cummin*, being very exact in the ceremonial, or less substantial parts of our duty, and *neglecting the weightier matters of the law*. If we do, we are no more than *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, egregious hypocrites in the sight of God, and very

\* Psal. cxix. 6.

far from that purity of heart; that simplicity and sincerity recommended to us in the text. But,

2. WE are to consider it with regard to *man*; and this will also fall into several particulars. As,

(1.) IN the case of witness and deposition. The two grand rules of sincerity herein, are truth and impartiality. An evidence or witness, in what case soever he is called upon his oath, must give in nothing but what is *true*; he must vouch nothing *contrary* to his knowledge, and nothing *more* than he knows; and because the breaking or concealing of truth may be of the same ill consequence as downright falsehood, he must be also *full* and *impartial* in his deposition; not stifling or suppressing any thing which is requisite to the understanding the case, nor wilfully framing his words in such an obscure or double manner, that they may be easily misunderstood. But all he says should be literally true and clear, without any disguise or artifice whatever. And this would retrieve the honour of our publick courts, which are too often horribly abus'd and stain'd with perjury.

(2.) ANOTHER instance of sincerity is in the matter of *truth* and *friendship*. To be faithful in every concern wherein another man does reasonably depend upon us, is but common justice; and if we have encourag'd him so to depend upon us, by pretences of particular friendship and affection to him, we are still the more engaged to it. We are to attend his business with that honest care and diligence with which we would attend our own; to do the best we can for *him*, as for *our selves*; deal plainly and sincerely with him upon all occasions; decieving him in nothing, betraying him in nothing. The contrary to all this; dissimulation or treachery, or breach of trust, are not only not to be reconcil'd with that purity and singleness of heart to which

which our Christianity binds us, but contrary to the light and law of nature, and deservedly infamous with all men.

(3.) A third particular wherein sincerity is of mighty use, is the affair of *contract*, or *merchandizing*; in which are included all the ways of sale, and bargain and exchange, which we use amongst men. In these simplicity and honesty are more to govern than the letter of laws and statutes, which cannot provide for all accidents, or against all evasions. The custom of marts and publick places of sale, with other human regulations of trade and commerce, may indulge many things for the sake of peace which Christianity cannot countenance; and though when the bargain is concluded, the buyer (how much soever imposed upon) has no remedy by law, this purity of heart, (the sincerity or uprightness we are now speaking of,) obliges the seller not only to strict justice and moderation *before* the contract, but (if it be concluded upon ignorance or mistakes) to the making of due amends and satisfaction *after*. For it *\* seeks not its own interest only but the good of others*. And St. Paul has expressly required of us, that *† no man go beyond or defraud his brother in any matter*; and has given a reason for it which should make us tremble, *because the Lord is the avenger of all such*.

(4.) SINCERITY and simplicity are to run thorough all *our promises* and *engagements* one to another. And here the rule is plainness in the act of promising, and honesty in the due performance of what we promise. The most facted of all such contracts is *Marriage*; and much more so to Christians than to all other people in the world: For to us, it represents a great mystery and a great love, ‡ the love of Christ to his Church, and his

\* 1 Cor. x. 24. † 1 Theſſ. iv. 6. ‡ Eph. v. 23, &c 33.

union with it ; and therefore calls for the greatest endearment, and the most faithful performance, in imitation of that great example. The husband is so to love his wife, even as Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it : And the wife is to be so faithful, so subject to the husband in all things, as the Church is, or ought to be to Christ. This is the true meaning and extent of the marriage-vow : And if we do not thus consider it, if we consult the enjoyment only, or the fortune, and mind not the duty and affection this engagement carries with it ; or if we do consider this without intending or regarding to perform it, we act against that integrity and purity of heart which is the principle of honest men ; we scandalously break our faith, and abuse the person to whom in the solemn presence of God we plighted it. But beside the marriage-vow, all other covenants, contracts and promises, of whatever kind, if lawfully made, are to be honestly and carefully observ'd ; and if unlawful, ought not to be made. We must deal plainly and fairly, without any equivocation, double-meaning, trick, or artifice, in the making of them, or any shuffling or evasion in the execution. And this is the rather to be insisted on, because it has prevailed by custom for men to lay hold on the little circumstances in law, which may be thought to give them an advantage against their obligation ; and think the point of conscience safe enough, if they fall not within the reach of human punishment. But this is not what will bear us out with God ; for to him we must account for our simplicity and honest usage of one another. Let us therefore observe rather what *Christianity requires*, than what the law of the land *cannot binder* ; what is honourable and honest, than what is merely safe and indemnifying.

(5.) AND *lastly*, The same simplicity is to inspire all our *common conversation*. It's true, every word in discourse, every expression in our civilities, cannot nicely be weighed before-hand, but custom in this case is very much to be considered: For this being the general rule for the signification and force of words, tho' perhaps some ways of speaking critically, taken to pieces, may be found to carry more in them than he who uses them designs; yet if custom do interpret them in a looser sense, there is no harm done; and provided sincerity and prudence keep us within that usual acceptation, conscience may be satisfied. But that which can never be reconcil'd to this purity of intention we are now upon, is *flattery* and *lying*, assurances of kindness, and all the endearments and service which can be expressed, without any inward consent and affection in the heart. To advise against our secret judgment, to commend without a real approbation, and to conceal our private hatred and contempt in the good words of charity and high caresses, are absolutely against the Scripture-rule laid down to us by St. Paul; \* *Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour.* † *Lye not one to another, seeing ye have put off the old man with his deeds.* Lying is one branch of the old man, the degenerate and vicious principle within us: Now the old man (or this corrupt nature, and the several branches of it) being to be laid aside, and so signified to be done by every Christian in his baptism; there remains to those who profess this pure and holy religion no place for lying, dissembling, flattery, or any thing of this kind; but sincerity and uprightness even in little and common things is to be the measure of our daily practice; for this is one great issue of the *new*

\* Eph. iv. 25.

† Col. iii. 9, 10.



man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him. And thus we have an account of the first sense of *purity*, as opposed to mixture and composition, and implying *sincerity*.

(II.) THE second sense of it comes next to be considered, as opposed to defilement or pollution. And here I must premise some general notion of the thing, and tell you what this purity is; and this may best be done by its opposite, *uncleanness*, the character of which I shall give you as the holy Scriptures deliver it. You may observe, that *spirit* and *flesh* are there spoken of as the two great fountains of action, or the principles of good and evil respectively in all mankind. Now that which is derived from the *flesh* is unclean, corrupt and filthy; and the particulars are summed up by St. John in these three heads, \* *The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life*. For tho' that Apostle expresses the principle of all these by another general term [the world;] yet *the world* there signifies no more than is expressed in other places by *the flesh*. The † purity therefore introduced by the christian institution (that administration of the *Spirit*, as it is called) being directly opposite to the impure works of the *flesh*, we shall treat of it here accordingly, as opposed to the *sensual appetites* seated in the body; to *covetousness*, and to *pride* or *ambition*, which are the three grand instances singled out by St. John.

FIRST then, This *purity of heart* is expressed in a sober and regular moderation of *the appetites of the body*, which may be reduced to two heads, as referring either to *lust*, or to *intemperance*.

(I.) THE christian purity expresses its self in restraint of *lust*, which in an especial manner has obtained the character of uncleanness and impurity.

\* 1 John ii. 16.

† 2 Cor. viii. 9.

And, [I.] It prohibits and prevents the outward act of uncleanness, and all connivances, solicitations and attempts in order to it. Fornication, adultery, and that horrid crime against nature, not fit to be named, with all the less branches of pollution, or immodesty, fall under this class, as directly opposite to christian purity, and such as are guilty of them excluded (without a deep and seasonable repentance) from the kingdom of heaven. \* *For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication. That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour. For God has not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.* † *Walk not as other Gentiles walk—who being past feeling, have given themselves over to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.* ‘‘ *Neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, shall inherit the kingdom of God.* And the reason why this purity is expected from us, is very well given by St. Paul. ‖ *Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ—the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you; and ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price, and therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.* Christ has thought fit to honour the whole human nature, (the body, as well as that more noble part the mind or soul) by his own appearing in it; and therefore our bodies also have a very near and honourable relation to him, and ought not to be debased to filthiness and pollution. They are the temples of God, the holy Spirit dwelling in them to direct and influence our minds; and therefore ought not to be employed in any thing unworthy of his presence, and con-

\* 1 Thess. iv. 3, 4, 7.

† Eph. iv. 17, 19.

‘‘ 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10.

‖ 1 Cor. vi. 15, 19, 20.

trary to his service. And *lastly*, They are not our own, to use or to abuse at pleasure, because our Saviour has actually purchased them to himself by his death and sufferings \* for their redemption. [2.] This christian purity restrains not only from those gross acts of uncleanness abovenamed, but from all *lascivious* and *impure discourse*. The filthy tongues of some men are enough (one would think) to poison the very air they breath in; 'tis certain they contribute exceedingly to corrupt the minds of those who hear them, by filling them with lewd thoughts and ideas, exciting base inclinations, and strengthening that concupiscence which it is a Christian's business to subdue. In opposition to this rude and beastly entertainment, St. Paul commands us to † *put all filthy communication out of our mouths*; and would not have either ‡ *filthiness*, or *foolish talking*, or *jesting*, to be so much as *named* amongst Christians. For that such a conversation is an argument of an impure heart, our Lord has taught us; when he lays it down for a maxim, that *an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil; for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh*. And therefore [3.] This purity must be seated also in the heart. It must restrain the *inward appetite* and *affection*, the *desire*, the *meditation*, and the *purpose* of uncleanness. We must not please *our selves* by wallowing in lewd and vicious thoughts, any more than we may corrupt *others* by venting them in dissolute and immodest talk. For tho' our thoughts are secret with respect to men, and so not scandalous or offensive to the world; yet there is no such thing as privacy with respect to God: \* *He is the searcher of all hearts, he understands our thoughts*

\* Rom. viii. 24.

∴ Luke vi. 45.

† Coloss. iii. 8.

‡ 1 Chron. xviii. 9.

‡ Eph. v. 4.

afar off. \* *He compasses our path and our lying down, and is acquainted with all our ways.* We are as much concerned therefore to keep a guard upon our thoughts, as upon our outward actions, may on some considerations more: For the strongest garrisons ought to be on the frontiers of an enemy; and if ever sin prevail over us, the heart is that pass which must be first attempted and obtain'd. If ever we be drawn to actual lewdness, the inclination to it must be first encourag'd there, and there must the contrivance and the scheme of vice be laid. † *Keep thy heart with all diligence, says Solomon, for out of it are the issues of life.* The advice is good, and the reason for it just and true. St. Paul confirms the former, when he advises not only to avoid *fornication and uncleanness*; but in order to that, *∴ to mortify inordinate affection and concupiscence.* And our Saviour gives the reason for it, when he tells us, that \* *out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murmurs, adulteries, fornications, &c.* So that whoever would be pure, must first be pure in heart, carefully resisting and stifling the beginnings of lust and impurity there, and imploring daily the grace of God to assist him. It's true, there are many who may not be thus pure in heart, and yet may keep from the gross outward acts of uncleanness; for many things may hinder these, which cannot reach the purpose or design, or overrule the appetite of, and delight in, such impurities. The severity of Laws perhaps, the reverence of friends, the dread of shame and disreputation, or it may be the fear of mischief and distempers, may deter them; but it is the business of the christian religion, not only to make the *fruit*, but the *tree* good also.

\* Psal. cxxxix. 2, 3.

† Prov. iv. 23.

∴ Col. iii. 5.

\* Matth. xv. 19.

(2.) THE *second* thing restrained by christian purity, with respect to the appetites of the body, is *intemperance*, or excess in eating and drinking. St. Paul, in his black catalogue of the works of the flesh, has inserted \* *drunkenness* and *revellings*, as well as adultery and other acts of uncleanness, and has alike excluded them who do such things from inheriting the kingdom of heaven. And that the avoiding such excesses is one instance of that purity in heart we are discoursing of, appears from our Saviour's caution to his Disciples, † *Take heed to your selves, lest at any time your HEARTS be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness*. The eager appetite and thirsty affection to these vices, having got possession of the heart, are a very great hindrance to a spiritual life, and render the soul stupid and brutish, insensible of future happiness, and averse to God and goodness. But that which still more evidently makes it proper to consider them here, is this, that they are *immediate incentives to lust*, they are fuel to that impure flame, they pamper the body to wantonness, and over-heat the blood, and by that means fill us with leud desires and fancies, and excite us to all manner of uncleanness. The observation is too obvious to be denied; and therefore whoever would be *pure in heart*, even in the sense given of it in the former article, must purify himself from this intemperance, and cleanse his heart from those luxurious inclinations which may lead him to it. He must restrain his appetites to the proper use they were intended for, and not suffer his body, which is indeed but a *servant* to the better part, his soul, to usurp the government within him. 'Tis reason which ought to be the steward there, *That faithful and wise steward who is to be ruler of the household, to give*

\* Gal. v. 21.

† Luke xxi. 34.

*them their meat in due season*, to measure out those due supplies and reparations which are needful for the body, and restrain all that excess which would but sensualize the mind, and indulge irregular desires. We have now considered purity in opposition to the *lusts of the flesh*. Our next consideration of it must be,

2. *SECONDLY*, As it restrains *the lust of the eye*, the love and desire of *money*; and the rather, because St. Paul has taught us, that \* *this is the root of all evil*. Now this base affection in the heart defiles it, by drawing it down and chaining it to objects which are much below the heavenly original and noble capacities of the soul of man, and unworthy of those great and glorious hopes laid up for the believing Christian. Impurity it is to be always groveling in the dirt, to spend our days in toiling for a little harden'd earth, and pleasing our selves as fondly in the possession of it, as children do with trifles. The christian religion would raise us up to higher thoughts, and better expectations, and more refined enjoyments. † *If ye be risen with Christ*, says the Apostle, *set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth*. This, therefore, is another instance, in which we ought to purify our hearts, *viz.* from the love of this world, and of the wealth and riches of it, which falls under the name of covetousness, and may be branched out (so far as we are concerned with it at present) into this threefold division. (1.) The coveting any thing which is the right and possession of another, and this is expressly forbidden in the tenth commandment. ‡ *Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his man servant, nor his maid servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing*

\* 1 Tim. vi. 10.

† Col. iii. 1, 2.

‡ Exod. xx. 17.

*that is thy neighbour's.* The course of trade and honest commerce is not at all affected by this prohibition, so far as our neighbour has a power to alienate or transfer his right; and therefore by this coveting is meant an envious or eager desire of what is another man's property, either where he cannot part with his right, or where he will not; 'tis a desire to have what he enjoys, whether he will be willing or not, and to compass it by fraud or violence, when it cannot be fairly obtained. And to purify our selves from these irregular desires, we must inculcate upon our minds that contentment which Christianity recommends to us. \* *Let your conversation, says St. Paul, be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have.* (2.) Another branch of the vice abovementioned is an *over-eager sollicitude, and anxious care for gain and profit*, though in an honest way; much more when it puts men upon the little arts of lying and deceit to obtain it; and there, I must needs say, it usually ends, however honestly it began; for when men have set their hearts upon growing rich and raising an estate, they lie under a temptation of abusing an honest calling, by dishonest practices. Solomon long ago observed it, † *He that maketh haste to be rich, shall not be innocent.* And after him the Apostle; *They that will be rich, fall into temptations, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.* And therefore he advises, that ‡ *having food and raiment (the necessities of life convenient for our rank and family) we should therewith be content.* Nay, tho' we tie our selves down by the restraints of conscience, to exact honesty and fair-dealing, yet an excessive thirst of being rich is not allowable in a Christian. The royal Prophet cautions us against

\* Heb. xiii. 5.

† Prov. xxviii. 20.

‡ 1 Tim. vi. 8, 9.

it, *Labour not to be rich*; and our Saviour has done the same, *∴ Lay not up for your selves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for your selves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.* And in another place has given us fair warning, *\* how hard it is for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God.* Riches are hard to be obtain'd by our industry, with a conscience perfectly good, or without more care and trouble than they are worth; hard to be kept, for accidents and ill men may easily deprive us of them; hard to be enjoy'd without vanity, and trusting too much in them, or doating too much upon them. And therefore we must purify our hearts from this inordinate appetite, and make the wish of *Agur's* ours, as it is the wish of every wise man; *† Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me; lest I be full and deny thee, and say, who is the Lord? or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.* (3.) The third branch of covetousness, is, that sense which common use has fixed upon the word, *viz. a penurious narrow spirit*, and such a fondness of wealth in the possession of it, as renders men averse to use or lay it out where hospitality, charity, or even their own necessities, call for it. Against this also our Lord has caution'd us. *‡ Take heed and beware of covetousness, for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth*; and St. Peter requires, *|| that we should use hospitality one to another without grudging,*

|| Prov. xxiii. 4.

∴ Matth. vi. 19, 20, 21.

\* Mark x. 24.

† Prov. xxx. 8, 9.

‡ Luke xii. 15.

|| 1 Pet. iv. 9.



As to charity, *Salomon* has laid it down as a rule, *† With-hold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it.* And as to providing necessaries for our selves, and those who depend upon us, the common reason of mankind is argument enough for it, and has justly branded the contrary, as absurd, sordid and ridiculous. For what are riches for, but to be used? *\* There is no good in them; but for a man to rejoice and to do good in his life; and also that every man should eat, and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour; it is the gift of God.* Now this penurious affection to the wealth we have, is to be purged out of our hearts, by restraining the estimation of riches, that we may not set too great a value upon them; for they are vain and uncertain things, they will either leave us before, or we must leave them when we die; and therefore we should consider to how little purpose we hoard them up.

THE third and last of those works of the flesh (reckon'd up by *St. John*) which christian purity sets its self against, is the *pride of life*, that affectation of esteem, and power, and popularity, which goes under the name of *vanity* and *ambition*, that over-great value we are apt to put upon our own persons, parts, and wit; our own performances, our learning, wisdom, beauty, or any other faculty or advantage, and the foolish ostentation we are apt to make of pomp and grandeur in circumstances which will any way bear it; together with the consequents of pride, in all or any of these instances, contempt of others, contention, animosity, and above all, divisions in the Church, and seditions in the state: But these will come to be consider'd in another place. I will only here take notice that *St. Paul* reckons up them, as well as un-

† Prov. iii. 27.

‡ Eccl. iii. 12, 13.

cleanness, amongst the works of the flesh. \* *The works of the flesh, says he, are manifest, which are these, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murder, drunkenness, revellings, and such like.* True christian purity, therefore, is concern'd to purge out all these sooty and ill-natur'd qualities which defile the mind, and like a secret poison, swell it to an unnatural bulk, and tend to as certain (tho' a slower) ruin. For † *the proud in heart are an abomination to the Lord*; God sets himself || *to resist the proud*; and when the Almighty contends, he will certainly overcome at last.

HAVING given you thus a full description of the persons blessed, *the pure in heart*, by the several particulars which such a purity restrains, and stands in opposition to; I must conclude the first general head with this caution, that we are to take the character *in its full extent and comprehension*, and not in any one article separate from the rest. *The pure in heart*, therefore, is the sincere and honest man, who has devoted his best affections and his worship to the one true God, serves him in the way of modesty and obedience, pays him adoration both with his mind and body; is really good and virtuous, as well as seems to be so, and has respect to *all* the commandments of God; is faithful in all his depositions; true to his trust and to his promises; sincere in his friendships, and in all his conversation; and honest in his dealings; indulges himself in no impurity of action, word, or thought; in no intemperance or excess; in no covetous desires, no greediness of gain, no vile affection to his money; no pride, ambition, or ostentation. He must be *all this*, to constitute him one of those

\* Gal. v. 19, 20, 21.

† Prov. xvi. 5.

|| James iv. 6.

pure in heart, to whom the blessing (next to be considered) appertains, for \* *without holiness no man shall see the Lord*. And now,

II. *SECONDLY*, We are to enquire into the nature of that blessing, *they shall see God*; and this shall be done in as few words as possible.

(1.) It may be observed in Scripture language, that words signifying any corporeal sense, as tasting, seeing, feeling, and the like, when God is represented as the object of such senses, are frequently put for knowing, enjoying, or being affected with some attribute of his. As in the *Psalmist*, † *O taste and see that the Lord is good*; which signifies no more than, Oh perceive and be affected with the goodness of God. So *St. Peter* also uses the phrase; ‡ *if so be, ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious*, have understood and found by experience that he is so. And *St. Paul* in his defence at *Athens*, || *That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him and find him*, i. e. understand and know him. This being apply'd to the present expression of *seeing God*, it may properly signify thus much, That the *pure in heart* shall have rich communications of the grace and blessing of God in this life; shall enjoy a great measure of his favour and love, and comfortable sense of it; shall be blessed with a clearer perception, and an higher relish than ordinary, of the divine excellencies, and know as much of the divine nature as can be communicated, known, and understood by us in the present state of things: And all this as a pledge or seal, a foretaste of what we shall know and enjoy more perfectly in the world to come; which is the state referred to in my second observation.

\* Heb. xii. 14.

† Psal. xxxiv. 8.

‡ 1 Pet. ii. 3.

|| Acts xvii. 27.

(2.) **THAT**

(2.) THAT though God is a Spirit, invisible to human eyes, as they are now qualify'd, there is a beatifick vision of him to be enjoy'd in heaven; where our bodies being at the resurrection spiritualiz'd, (as St. Paul has taught us, *\* it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body*) sublimed into the dispositions and qualities of a spirit, and so the faculties of it more pure, and more intelligent, and capable of perceiving more refined objects, we † *shall see God as he is*, and be for ever happy in the blessed sight of him. The eye shall then see after the manner of a spirit, being part of a spiritual body ‡; and if the angels, which are spirits, have an immediate and perceptive vision of God, why may not the human nature, when it becomes so spiritualized? How indeed to describe that vision, as yet we know not; for St. John, in the place above-cited, tells us, || *It does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know only in general, that we shall see him as he is.* It will be something proportionable to our then more refined and excellent state; there will be that emanation or communication of the divine presence in the state of glory, which shall be a real and lasting satisfaction to the faculties of a glorified body. And it is observable that St. John applies it to the very case we are now upon; for having spoke of this beatifick vision of God, his next words are, ∴ *And every man that hath this hope in him, [viz. of seeing God in glory,] doth purify himself even as he is pure.* The pure in heart, therefore, shall see God, in the manner above describ'd; and this I take to be the most proper meaning of the words in this Beatitude. Those pure and holy persons, whose temper and course of life in this world has so well

\* 1 Cor. xv. 44.

† 1 John iii. 2.

‡ Matth. xviii. 10.

|| 1 John iii. 2.

∴ 1 John iii. 3.

qualify'd them for a better, shall be received into that most pure and excellent state of glory, into which *\*there shall in no wise enter any thing that defileth, nor any one that worketh abomination, or maketh a lie.* They shall there be admitted to that more glorious sight of God, than it was possible they could be while the vail of dull mortality was upon them; † *for now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face.* Think, Christian, upon the happiness of this; think how you are pleas'd with the sight and conversation of an intimate friend, especially after a long and tedious absence, when at best you could only converse with him by letters; and think how joyfully you behold the face of a reconciled enemy; and then consider what it will be for you to be admitted into the presence and the bright reflexions of that countenance which alone can speak peace and solid comfort to you. Think of the *honour* and *privilege* of it too, in being called up to serve the King of glory, the supreme and universal Sovereign of heaven and earth, in his own court, and near his person, where you may for ever contemplate, at the nearest view, his infinite majesty, power, wisdom and goodness. Think of the *peculiar agreeableness* of this reward to that *purity* which it is designed to recompense. Thou shalt be received into heaven, that most pure and perfect state, and see and converse with God, the most pure and perfect object, that original essential purity, which thou hast here endeavoured (though with great imperfection) to imitate, and shalt then rejoice in to all eternity. And having raised thy affections by such thoughts, adore and bless the mercy of thy Saviour, who has entail'd this blessing upon *the pure in heart, that they shall see God.*

\* Rev. xxi. 27.

† 1 Cor. xiii. 12.



## C H A P. VII.

### Of P E A C E.

MATTH. V. 9.

*Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God.*



HIS in order is the *seventh* of the Beatitudes, which we will consider in the same method we have the former.

I. THE character of the persons here described, *the peace-makers.*

II. THE reward assigned unto them, *they shall be called the children of God.*

I. IN our consideration of the persons here blessed, the *peace-makers*, it will be necessary to premise something in general, with respect to the latitude or signification of the word, before we reckon up the particulars wherein this excellent and diffusive character exerts it self. *Ἐιρηνουργός*, is the word made use of in the text; and it may signify either (1.) a reconciler and composer of differences as a third person, a promoter of peace and good agreement amongst others: And this is the sense to which

which our *English* translators have confined it. Or (2.) one of a peaceable and quiet disposition as to his own behaviour. For *Ποιῶν* is used not only for the causing, procuring, or effecting of a thing, but for the inclination of the mind, and the bent of practice; *Ποιῶν Ψεῦδος*, *he that maketh a lye*, is he who is enclined or given to lying. So in the first Epistle of St. John, *Whosoever is born of God, ἀμαρτίαν ἔ ποιεῖ*, *does not commit sin*, i. e. does not live in the indulged habit or practice of sin; and again, *Ὁ μὴ ποιῶν δικαιοσύνην*, *whosoever does not righteousness*, i. e. sincerely endeavours not in the general course of his life to practise holiness and virtue, *is not of God*. Agreeably whereto, *Ἐργω-ποιῶν*, may be one who does, *τὰ τ' Ἐργῶν ποιεῖν*, practise the things which make for peace, and is of a peaceable temper and behaviour. And thus including both significations, the peace-maker blessed in this text, is such a true inward friend and lover of peace, that he endeavours to preserve it where it is, and where it is broken to repair it; as well betwixt others where he has only the quality of a reconciler, as betwixt himself and another, where he is also a party.

Now this temper will express it self,

(1.) *FIRST*, Towards all mankind in general; he bears an hearty good-will to them, desires a good agreement amongst them, is averse to war and blood-shed, to national feuds and private animosities; and if it were in his power would establish an intire serenity and peace through all the world. And the reason of this is founded in the very design of nature from the first: For whatever some have dreamed to the contrary, the natural state is not, nor ever was a state of hostility and war; but of friendship, unity and peace. Men were not formed in great multitudes out of the dust or mud of the earth, as other animals were, but descended  
all

all from *one man*; (even *Eve* her self being taken from the side of *Adam*) that they might live as one body, as brethren, and relations in an intire and mutual affection, remembring their common original. So afterward, when the world was drowned, the human species was preserved in one family (not in so many persons of several and independent families) to intimate and recommend to posterity the same obligation to friendship and agreement. Beside that, we may observe how nature has furnished some creatures in their very make and form with instruments of violence, and others have a sort of natural armour by which they may secure and defend themselves; but man is brought naked into the world, with a body unarmed and undefended, neither apt for mischief, nor able to resist it; and what can this imply, but the peace and gentleness naturally implanted in him, and that there should be no opposition, no hostilities at all, betwixt those of this species, whatever there might be amongst other animals? It's true, through the *corruption and depravity* of nature, wars there are and will be, and private violence and animosities too, so long as pride, ambition, covetousness, or revenge, possess the minds of men; but these things ought not so to be, nor is it at all agreeable to nature. But perhaps while we speak so largely against wars, it may be objected that *God* encouraged the *people* of the *Jews* to war; and not only so, but even to such severities therein as carry the face of cruelty and horror; as in the total destruction of the *Canaanites*, and *Saul's* expedition against the *Amalekites*. In answer to which, as to the wars they had in their passage to *Canaan*, or in taking possession of that land; it is enough to say, that *God* being the Sovereign Lord and Proprietor of the whole earth, had long before given that land to *Abraham* and his posterity; and so the re-

covering



covering of it was no more than the recovering of their own; and as to their cruelty in the total excision of the inhabitants, the reason given for the command of that, is, that the *Israelites* might not, by mixing with them, learn their idolatrous worship and superstitious customs. The wars they had with their neighbours after, were either by the authority of God, (who, as we observed before, may dispose of all countries as he will, and give the dominion of them to whom he pleases) to enlarge their borders, or else to vindicate themselves from oppression; and in this, all circumstances laid together, there could be no injustice or unpeaceableness. That war with the \* *Amalekites*, and that dreadful slaughter of them all without distinction of sex or age, was also by the express command of God, (that God to whom vengeance belongs) to punish them for their base attacking of his people *Israel*; without any previous injury done, or provocation given on their side, as they passed through the wilderness toward † *Canaan*; and was no more than God had solemnly threatned from that very time that he would do. It may be objected also against this *universal benignity* and *good-will*, above described, that in the book of *Psalms* there are many curses and imprecations uttered against evil men, which seem to be contrary to such a temper. But to this I answer, that the Prophets (for such were the composers of those *Psalms*) being inspir'd by the Holy Ghost, wrote not so much their own sense as that of the divine enditer; those expressions are rather to be looked upon as denunciations and prophecies of what would certainly come to pass, than curses or imprecations of the sacred pen-men. Notwithstanding these objections therefore, we may still insist

\* 1 Sam. xv. 2, 3.  
18, 19.

† Exod. xvii. 14. Deut. xxv. 17,

upon it, that the law of peace and kindness is inscribed in the very nature of men, by God's authority and hand, who is the Author of nature; and that wars (however lawful when they become the only effectual method left us to do our selves and others right,) are not desirable, nor to be rashly engag'd in, nor (when reasonable terms of peace and security are propos'd) to be obstinately continued and pursued; but we are to be govern'd in all our conduct, whether as private men, or as societies and nations, by a mild and peaceable disposition one towards another, that we may come up to the Apostle's rule, *\*If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.*

*SECONDLY*, This disposition will express it self in a particular regard to the peace of the Church. By the Church I here mean, that grand and catholick society selected from the rest of the world, and distinguish'd by the name of *Christians*; the whole body of such as are baptized into the name, and profess the religion of *Christ*, and live under the spiritual government, discipline, ordinances and privileges of the Gospel: But more especially that branch of it which is the happy establishment in our own country. All these are to be considered as people incorporated into one community; and tho' they may be divided amongst themselves by different opinions, yet they are distinguish'd from the professors of any other religion by the general articles of their confession, and by these are united and knit together into one fellowship. Now with respect to the Church, the man of peace is to shew his disposition thereto, both as a *maker of peace*, and a *lover or practiser of peace*.

1. *FIRST*, as a *maker of peace*, or one who endeavours to the utmost, in his proper place and

\* Rom. xii. 18.

station, to heal the divisions in the Church of Christ, to reconcile the disagreeing parties, and reduce them to that unity and harmony, that they may indeed appear to make but one body, and one profession. This is a work of great honour and goodness; but withal it requires an excellent wisdom, and many heads, and hands, and hearts combining to effect it. If *sovereign princes*, endowed with a zeal and virtue as eminent as their power, would consult together in earnest upon this glorious enterprize, or labour in it at least as far as they can within their own dominions; if *general councils* were convened with such a temper; if *ecclesiastical governours* would enter into the same design, and be industrious to promote it; what an happy union, what a peaceful serenity in the affairs of religion might we not hope for throughout the christian world? But without the concurrence of all these, I doubt 'tis hardly practicable; nor will it be proper for me to prescribe, supposing such endeavours, how or by what measures so great a point may be effectually gained; or what compliances are necessary on all hands, to fix a regular and lasting union; this must be left to those who have authority to concert the matter. Yet something there is, which even a private Christian may contribute towards this great and good work. Where piety and learning have the happiness to meet in him, a clear and cool head, with a peaceable and religious heart, they qualify him for promoting a spirit of peace in the Church, by his publick writings. Perhaps he may be able in so affecting a manner to represent the mischiefs of separation and division, the beauty and advantages, the reasonableness and necessity of union, to propose such a temper or medium betwixt the two angry extremes, to propose it in such a mild and engaging way, and to establish it with such a strength of argument, as by the blessing of God, may

may be of great use to shew all sides the error of their dissentions, and prepare their minds for such a concord and agreement, as the authority of their governors may think fit to impose upon them when that shall come to be concerted. He may also in the course of his conversation in the world, in the education of his children, or upon any other opportunity which offers, make it his pious care to promote such principles as tend to peace, and to bear down the credit of uncharitable and factious heats, by shewing the folly and the wickedness of them. But this is not all, there is somewhat more which every Christian may, and ought to do, in this affair. He ought to apply himself by *servent and frequent prayer* to Almighty God, the God of peace and love, that as he thought it not too much to establish peace betwixt heaven and earth, at the expence of the sufferings of his only Son our Saviour; he would also, by the mild and gracious influences of his holy Spirit, establish it on earth, amongst all the branches of that family which he has thus redeemed and purchased to himself; *enlightning those who are in error*, or inspiring the whole body of Christians with that *good-will and charitable affection at least* which may unite their *hearts*, if not their *notions and opinions*. Thus \* Christ, a little before he suffered, put up a most pathetick prayer to God for this great blessing of *unity* amongst all who should believe in him. But,

2. *SECONDLY*, We are to consider the Christian as a lover of peace; one who *practises* as well as *prays* for it, and promotes it in the Church by his own peaceable temper and conduct. Now this appears in him in several particulars.

\* John xvii. 20, 21, &c.

(1.) HE is not apt to *embrace* or *take up* an opinion contrary to what the Church has universally receiv'd. He does not affect a sett of new and singular notions in matter of faith, or peculiarities in discipline or worship, which the primitive ages of the Church either knew nothing of, or never own'd, or generally wrote against; and which the modern ages also have alike not thought of, or else condemned. For he is willing to look upon the Church collective, made up and govern'd by many wise, and learned, and pious men, as better able to interpret difficult places of holy Scripture than himself, or than any of the forward leaders of separation. He does not make himself a *slave* to the decisions of any man, or any body of men, to believe and act along with them at all adventures; for where they apparently forsake the Scriptures, he forsakes *them*; but he is always very tender when it comes to the point of rejecting probable and receiv'd opinions or practices, in defence of which a great deal may be said. He remembers the exhortation of St. Paul to the *Philippians*, to *\* stand fast in one spirit, with one mind,* — to *† walk by the same rule, and to mind the same thing.* ‡ *If there be therefore,* says that Apostle, *any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the spirit, &c. be ye like minded.* And so to the *Corinthians* also; *|| I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment.* However,

(2.) FORASMUCH as a man cannot believe just what he will, but what his own understanding and judgment are convinced of, the peaceable Christi-

\* Phil. i. 27.

† Phil. iii. 16.

‡ Phil. ii. 1, 2.

|| 1 Cor. i. 10.

an, if in any point he is not satisfy'd with the resolution and decisions of the Church, the doctrine, worship, or discipline thereof, will modestly keep his opinion to himself; and not set up for gaining profelytes, or being the head of a party. He will not make it his business to rail at and expose whatever agrees not with his own sentiments, and to raise a faction against every thing he does not like; but chuses rather to be silent and reserved upon such heads, as waiting till the Church her self discover the mistake, or he be convinced by better information. And though he cannot think as others do, he will keep up charity and a kind affection towards them; as *St. Paul* directs, when having required the *Philippians* to be like minded; lest that could not always be observed, he adds, *having the same love, being of one accord*. For men who differ in some points of judgment amongst themselves, may still bear the same love to one another which they have who do agree; they may live in the same accord and friendship, as if they were of the same mind. And this is a duty to take place where notions and opinions differ. Again,

(3.) THOUGH he disapprove of *many things* in the doctrine, order, or worship of the Church establish'd in his country, he will not be forward to engage in an open separation from it. He will be ready to hear and read with impartiality whatever may be argu'd for it; will try all ways to convince himself in favour of it, and at least will go as far as he can along with such an establishment; because he is really tender of breaking the peace of the Church, and weakening it by such divisions. He will do nothing through pride or obstinacy, or little and unworthy interests; but in the sincerity and uprightness of his heart, consult the honour, and safety, and edification of the Church, above his own or any other body's opinion. It is not

vernment, not speaking evil of dignities, or factiously censuring and railing at either the prince, or those in the administration under him. For that law in the book of *Exodus*, \**Thou shalt not revile the judges*, (so the margin of our *Bible* reads it) *nor curse the ruler of thy people*, is certainly of a moral nature, and still in force, and as such the Apostle † cites it; all governments being alike disturbed and injured by such unpeaceable and seditious practices.

(4.) IN avoiding as much as possible the engaging himself in *any party*, be the name or the pretences of it what they will. This fatal distinction by state parties (cherished by such as find their own private interest, and make their way to advancement by imposing upon well-meaning people) is of the last ill consequence both to truth and peace. To *truth*, as when men are once thoroughly engaged on such or such a side, and have listed themselves under a name (according as the distinction goes) being deluded into it by the intrigues and plausible stories and suggestions of such as have a turn to be served, and want a set of tools to serve it, their minds are effectually prejudiced, and their ears are stopped to all representations, however true and just they may be, of the ill designs or errors of those of that party which they have embraced, and to all the generous and good designs of the other which they have taken against. All the virtues of their own side are magnified, all their suggestions, true or false, have credit with them, and all their faults are disbelieved; and by a like prepossession the adverse party is run down, discredited, and condemned at all adventures: insomuch that *partiality*, which is the proper word to express the temper we have here described, has taken its very

\* *Exod.* xxii. 28.† *Acts* xxiii. 5.

name from *party*, and thereby sufficiently justifies our application, which daily experience also shews to be true in fact. And that all this must be a mighty prejudice to *peace* as well as truth, will not need many words to prove. For do we not every day behold the effects of it in the restless contrivances of either party to put down the other and advance it self, and that not without frequent convulsions in the state, and apparent hazard to the publick welfare, the most bitter animosities amongst private persons, alienation of love and friendship amongst relations and old acquaintance, reproaches, malicious offices, scurrilous libels, riots, and in short a wretched train of mischiefs, which disgrace religion, disturb the peace of the kingdom, and tend to overthrow the government. The peaceable man therefore wisely sees this and avoids it. He is either of no party at all, or, if this be next to impossible, and he sees reason to think better of one party than of another, and to conduct himself accordingly, he will never go along with it in heat and passion, he will impartially consider every thing, suspend his belief of many things alledged on either side, and act only so far with any as in his cool and real judgment he thinks is most for the service and safety of his country; for let him have what inclination he will toward one party more than the other, he makes not their little interests or example *his rule*, but follows them no farther than they pursue the publick good, and carries kindly and obligingly, peaceably and charitably, to all without distinction.

(5.) THIS peaceable disposition, with respect to the state, will express it self in frequent and hearty prayers for the peace and welfare of the publick. St. Paul expressly calls us to it, when he exhorts,  
*\* That supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giv-*

\* 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2.



ing of thanks be made for all men, for kings, and all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. The Israelites were all called upon by David, \* *To pray for the peace of Jerusalem*; and even in the captivity of the Jews at Babylon, Jeremiah requires them even to † *seek the peace of that city*, where they were detained as captives, and *pray unto the Lord for it, for in the peace thereof*, says he, *ye shall have peace*. We have now done with the character of the peace-maker, as a member of civil government, or publick societies. We must look upon him,

*FOURTHLY*, As he is in a *particular neighbourhood*, or *private relation*. And here he is to be considered,

1. As a maker of peace, a third person endeavouring to reconcile the differences of others, and to draw them as near in kindness and friendship, as they are in their dwellings and condition. And this he does,

(1.) *By persuasion*, by using the interest he has in the persons who are at difference (or in others, who may with better advantage make the same representations to them) to settle a right understanding one of another; for many quarrels arise from mere mistakes, without any just and real offence offered on either hand, but only supposed and fancied, till pride and jealousy feeding upon that supposition, exceedingly magnify the thing, and inflame the resentment. In this case, the peace-maker lays open the true state of the matter, and stripping it of the disguise which self-love, prejudice, and passion have involved it in, he shews them both their error; that there was really nothing of substance in the presumed offence, and that

\* Psal. cxxii. 6.

† Jer. xxix. 7.

therefore

therefore it ought not to be insisted upon. But then, because *every* difference does not arise from mistake, but sometimes *just occasions of offence* are given; in this case he endeavours to make the offending party sensible of what he has done; to convince him of the affront or injury, and of the evil of it; of the breach of duty he has been guilty of, not only toward his neighbour, but to God also, and makes him ready to humble himself, to acknowledge his fault, and to desire reconciliation and amity; while on the other hand he prepares the party offended to receive him, upon these terms, into his charity and friendship, by telling him the duties of forgiveness, the resemblance which such a generous temper bears to the mercy of God, and the necessity of it, in order to obtain for himself that mercy.

(2.) BECAUSE persuasion will not always do, the peace-maker is ready to take the trouble of *arbitration*, to compromise the matter, by giving his own positive judgment and opinion, where both parties are willing to rest satisfied with it, and refer themselves to him. In many differences (though perhaps of little value and concern) there may be some pretence of reason on both hands. Now if the plaintiff and defendant could be prevailed with by some charitable neighbours, to put the matter to *arbitration*, to chuse out by agreement one or more persons, of whose understanding and equity they have a good opinion, who should fully hear the case betwixt them, and decide it privately by an award, to which both parties should oblige themselves to stand; it would be a very great office of peace and good nature, both in those who take the pains to *persuade them* to so wise a method, and in those also who accept the trust of such a reference, and take upon them to determine the quarrel. This would be a means to stop a thousand of those trifling

trifling and contentious suits which are daily prosecuted, to the great dishonour of our courts of justice, and the great and needless expence of those who sue and who are sued. Beside, that a *publick determination* in course of law, however it may decide the action, leaves the contending parties still unclosed, and at a distance in the point which is of most importance, their charity and inward sentiments; which is a thing may better be effected by the *private peace-maker*. For experience shews, that when men once begin to contend, and sue openly, their malice grows with their expence; and whatever becomes of their cause, they are resolved never to be friends again: But when a difference has been amicably taken up by the interposition of friends, who with wisdom and gentleness moderate in the affair, they shall presently love one another as well, if not better than before. But the peace-maker, in this case, is to govern himself by these measures. He is not to be *over-busie*, to thrust himself too far into things wherein (without due invitation) he is not concern'd. He is not to affect the office in a way of *pride* and *ostentation*, but modestly and humbly to offer himself, or to accept it, being offered, as a part of christian duty, which in the sight and fear of God he is to execute. And *lastly*, he *must not be partial*, but consider the merits of the cause on both sides, with all possible candour and integrity. I pass now on to the *second* consideration of him,

2. As one of a *peaceable disposition* and *behaviour* towards all who are about him. 'Tis a melancholy thing to look into some families, and see them perpetually embroil'd in quarrels and divisions within themselves; to look into some neighbourhoods, towns, or parishes, and observe one family or person maintaining hatred and disgust against another, and this so frequent as it is in many instances; to see

see people resorting to the same holy assemblies, joining in the same publick prayers, the same christian offices of charity, receiving together the most solemn bond of unity and love, the sacrament of the Lord's supper, and yet carrying with them thither in their hearts a spirit of strife and bitterness, anger, violence, and contention. All this must needs be contrary to the temper of this Disciple in the text, the peaceable and quiet Christian, and to that blessed legacy of peace which \*Christ our Saviour bequeathed to all his followers. Let us see then how the peaceable man behaves himself in the neighbourhood and relations wherein God has plac'd him.

*FIRST*, then, He is very careful to give *no just offence or provocation* to any, which being taken hold of and resented, may become a ground of difference. The provocations I am concerned to speak of here, are either in *word*, or *action*. The first is the issue of † *the tongue*, that world of mischief and iniquity, with which men blast and stain one another; and when they have done blessing God with it, presently fall to cursing or reviling their neighbour. Now those who would come up to the character described in the text, make it their study to bridle this unruly member: The peaceable man will not revile or slander any one; he will not bring an evil report upon others, either openly or secretly; nor spread and tell again the malicious stories which are told him; but always enclines to speak and hope of his neighbours rather better than perhaps they generally deserve; he does not suffer his tongue to get an habit of ill language; but bespeaking every body fairly and civilly, does what he can to secure their living peaceably and kindly with him. As to his *actions*, he is alike studious

\* John xiv. 27.

† Jam. iii. 5, 6.

to do no injury, and give no provocation by them. He makes no voluntary trespass upon the possession of his neighbour, he refuses not any neighbourly courtesy or good office he can do him, and is very unwilling to be in any way the occasion of any loss or damage to him; in short, he does all he can to oblige, and nothing wilfully to disoblige him. But,

*SECONDLY*, Suppose he really chance to offend, or to provoke him by some foul word, imprudent conversation, or ill usage; he is willing and ready to tender his submission, to acknowledge his fault, to offer recompence according as the case requires, to desire reconciliation, to make the first step towards it, and to use all decent means of recovering amity, tho' it may be somewhat to his own loss. It is but reasonable that he who by evil language miscals, or by unworthy slanders vilifies and degrades his neighbour, should at least give himself the lye, and acknowledge it was neither true, nor fit to be spoken; for the reputations of men are like fair blossoms, pleasant, and hopeful of much future advantage from them, while they stand; but soon blown off by any violent and ill-natur'd wind; and a man may suffer great losses by the reproachful word or slanderous story of a neighbour. Now he that shall do thus, if he would return to the honour of the christian religion, and do an act worthy of the goodness of his profession, must earnestly repent of this evil, and acknowledge it with a real concern, not only to God, but also to the injur'd or offended party; and tender whatever just satisfaction shall be thought fit to be made him, and this in order to restore the peace of the neighbourhood, as well as repair the sufferings of the man. And the reason holds the same for evil actions. If by these we do wrong to him, or prejudice his affairs; or if by refusing some neighbourly

bourly office we provoke, or by a morose and uncivil carriage do affront him; rather than suffer the matter to grow to enmity and dissention, we should make restitution, and repair the injury; rather *above* the value of the offence or damage, than any thing *short of it*; be willing to ask pardon, and to make amends to him by more abundant civilities for the future.

*THIRDLY*, The peaceable man is not *apt to be offended*, he is not blown into a flame with every blast. As he is careful not to offend others, and to submit to others where he has offended; he considers also that he is not to take notice of every trifle and every passion, every bitter word, and every story; he passes them over with a general neglect and silence, leaving the offender to cool himself into a better mind, or rather waiting the grace of God for his conversion. For since all people cannot be persuaded to restrain their tongues, and to govern their actions as they ought to do, resentment would be endless, and living in the world intolerable; if all occasions of offence were to be taken, which the pride, or malice, or impertinence of men may give. Conniving at such injuries, as it will be a greater ease and satisfaction to a man's self, retaining a peaceful calmness in his own breast, and giving his thoughts no trouble (or as little as may be) for what he has not deserved, and could not hinder; so it will always be found a likelier way to reconcile an enemy, than the pursuing him with law or violence, and retaliation. And I will add, that nothing more effectually disappoints and mortifies the malicious offender, than to perceive that his provocations pass for nothing, his petty injuries give no disturbance, and his affronts are all too inconsiderable to be taken notice of. But I would not be misunderstood, as if *going to law*, to do our selves right in case of injuries of great concern

concern to our estate or reputation, was contrary to christian peace; for a peaceable and charitable temper may be secured even in *that*, by a readiness all along to agree the matter upon reasonable terms, insisting upon no more than reasonable damages, aiming only to recover our just rights, and not to gratify revenge or anger; behaving our selves to our adversaries, during the suit, in a friendly and peaceable manner; and contriving to put him to as little charge in the process as can be. A suit at-law thus managed, as it may be a necessary piece of justice, will be no breach of peace and charity. To proceed,

*FOURTHLY* and *lastly*, He who would come up to the highest pitch of religion in this matter, must not only be backward to resent, but even ready to *submit*, (I can find no better word for it) when he is injured. To see a man loaded with false reports and publick reproaches by a wicked and malicious tongue; to see him injur'd in his estate and livelihood, and at the same time pitying the offender's malice, and intreating him to terms of peace and kindness; is to see a fair copy of that pattern set us by our Saviour, a most rare and excellent instance of a christian spirit. But here great care is to be taken that discretion moderate and govern this exalted pitch of goodness, lest it be over-strained to an excess of weakness and folly. The injured Man who would be reconciled, who desires it and solicits for it, must do this in such a decent and wise manner as may secure the honour of the christian religion, and plainly shew that what he does proceeds from pure goodness and the love of peace, and not from fear and cowardice, and such a meanness of spirit as is indeed contemptible.

HAVING thus discharged my self of the description of the persons blessed, the *peace-makers*; I come now to consider in a few words that particular

lar blessing or reward assign'd them in my text, *they shall be called the children of God.* Such as know them and live about them in this world, and taste the beneficial influences of such a temper, and enjoy the advantages of it, or observe with a just admiration the beauty and usefulness thereof, shall bless those excellent souls who have and practise it, and acknowledge *that God is in them of a truth.* But this is a very small part of what those words include, *they shall be call'd the children of God,* i. e. they are and shall be owned (not only by men, but) *by God himself,* as his sons, and shall be receiv'd and lov'd accordingly. And all this,

(1.) BECAUSE by this pacifick and peaceable spirit, they in a peculiar manner \* *resemble God their heavenly Father,* who is † *the God of peace.* The character of divine goodness, which appears so visibly in the air and features of their mind (if I may so speak) sufficiently declares whose children they are; and as parents are apt to have most affection for those of their children who are most like them, or take most after them; so God will more especially own and cherish such as bear his image in this great and fair impression of it. And,

(2.) THEY shall be called his children, as they employ themselves in that which was the grand affair and business of his Son Christ Jesus; who came down from heaven to do the same good office betwixt God and man, which the peace-maker endeavours betwixt one man and another. For Christ is the great reconciler, who † *hath made peace through the blood of his cross;* and those who imitate him in labours of the same generous kind, may properly enough be stiled his brethren, and shall be owned as such by him, and by his heavenly Father.

\* 1 Cor. xiv. 33.

† 2 Cor. xiii. 11.

‡ Col. i. 20.



WE have considered thus briefly *why* they are called *the children of God*; it concerns us next in a word or two to enquire the *consequence* of this, or what *benefit* they have by being owned as the children of God, and in this lies the substance of the blessing. St. Paul has done it to our hands in that one text to the *Romans*, † *If children then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ—that we may be glorified together.* They shall be partakers of the heavenly inheritance, be received into everlasting life, and reign with Christ in glory. And he who thinks there can be a more desirable blessing than this, is at once insensible and unworthy of any thing which may be called a blessing; 'tis the utmost of a Christian's hopes, and a more than sufficient reward for all his labours. Yet this is still to be understood, as in the two preceding Beatitudes, supposing a principle of love to God, and obedience to him, as the ground of all our endeavours for making or observing peace, and including the rest of our christian duty required of us in the Gospel, as the terms of our entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

\* Rom. viii. 17.



C H A P.



## C H A P. VIII.

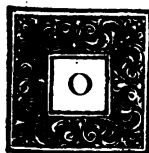
Of PERSECUTION for Righteousness  
sake.

MATTH. V. 10, 11, 12.

*Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake.*

*Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.*



OUR blessed Saviour, knowing that the adherence of his followers to him in the faith and practice of the Gospel would certainly raise them abundance of enemies; that the prince of darkness, who is also stiled \* *the prince of this world*, from his numerous and prevailing party in it, † *the spirit that still works in the children of disobedience*, would muster all his forces against them, and ha-

\* John xii. 31.

† Eph. ii. 2.

*rafs* them at least (if he can do no more) by daily detachments of the violence or malice of wicked men, in some degree or other to insult and ruffle them in the profession of truth and holiness, so that *\* through much tribulation* it is that *we must enter into the kingdom of God*; thought fit to encourage with a *particular blessing* those who were to be exposed to so many *particular hardships*; and not only to entail a reward upon their virtue, but upon their *suffering for it too*. And this he does in a much larger compass of expression than any of the foregoing Beatitudes took up; he is copious in describing the persecution, emphatical in pronouncing the reward, repeats the blessing twice, and throws in an exhortation and an additional comfort to the sufferer; and all this because he knew 'twas easier by much to *do well* than to *suffer well*: For notwithstanding all the corruption of our nature, the most elaborate and exalted *virtue* is not so much against the grain with us, so difficult or uneasy, as it is to *suffer persecution*. Our Saviour therefore was pleas'd to apply himself with *more than ordinary* pains (as we find in many other discourses of his as well as this) to fortify his Disciples against the terrible shock which he foresaw the rage of hell and human wickedness would give them. In the verses now before us we have,

I. THE persons blessed; those which are persecuted for righteousness sake.

II. THE blessedness or reward of such persons.

III. THEIR duty, or an exhortation to them to rejoice and be exceeding glad.

To begin with the *First*,

\* Acts xiv. 22.

I. THE

I. THE persons blessed, such as are *persecuted for righteousness sake*. And here it concerns us to enquire, what is meant by righteousness; and consider what that persecution is, which may be expected on the account of righteousness.

*FIRST*, What is here meant by righteousness; a point which had need be well understood, and carefully distinguished; for if this be not the cause for which we suffer, or if we mistake that for righteousness which is not really so, the title to the reward is lost.

By righteousness therefore is meant, (1.) The profession of the christian faith, or the adherence to some eminent fundamental article thereof. The most material articles of this are comprised in what we commonly call the *Apostles Creed*; but more at large in the Scriptures of the *Old and New Testament*. The Apostle tells us, that \* *all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*, i. e. in one word, 'tis a compleat and perfect rule of faith and manners. Whatsoever therefore is *expressly taught* us in the holy Scriptures as an article of faith, we are to believe; these being that † *form of sound words* delivered to us, which we must *hold fast, and earnestly contend for*: Whatever is *contrary* to the holy Scriptures, let the authority be what it will that shall attempt to force it upon us for a truth, is to be resolutely and boldly rejected: And whatsoever is *not expressly there laid down* as matter of faith and doctrine in religion, or by necessary consequence clearly to be inferred from that which is, we are not only under *no obligation to receive*; but when it shall be imposed as a truth essential to the faith and

\* 2 Tim. iii. 16.

† 2 Tim. i. 13.

communion of Christians, we are under an obligation to protest against it. And if we be called to suffer upon any of these accounts, either for maintaining the one, or rejecting, or opposing the other, it may with assurance be concluded that we suffer for righteousness sake. \* *St. Paul declares to the Galatians, that if he, or any other man, or even an angel from heaven should preach any other gospel to them than that which they had received, he should be accursed.* Let those consider this who † *make the commandment of God of no effect by their traditions,* and will needs be altering, adding to, or amending the Gospel which our Saviour left us. And since we cannot acknowledge that as an article of faith, which the Author of our faith Christ Jesus and his holy Apostles have not declared to be so, without owning *another Law-giver and Author of our faith* besides him, and *another Gospel*; to suffer persecution for refusing to do this, is properly and literally *to suffer for Christ*. But since there have been many differences about the interpretation of several texts of Scripture containing matters of faith and doctrine; and the Church has all along been divided into parties upon some or other of these, maintaining diverse and contrary expositions, and either side appears so zealous in their own sense of them, as to be ready to expose their lives and all their advantages for the maintaining of it; and since it has often happen'd, that not only in different places and countries, where different opinions are countenanced; but in the same state or body, according to the sway of government on one side or the other; men have suffered the loss of their estates, their liberty, and their lives, for maintaining a contrary sense of the same thing: It concerns us to be very careful in judging of the cause of such suffering, and to be very sure of the ground

\* Gal. i. 8, 9.

† Matth. xv. 6.

we go upon, before we pronounce it to be *for righteousness sake*. For as it is impossible that any article should be true in two contradictory senses, it must be supposed that some of these sufferers, tho' they have suffered for maintaining an article of religion, (or what they took to be so) have yet not suffered for righteousness sake, because they have maintain'd another sense or judgment of it than that which is indeed the true one. Righteousness therefore (consider'd as a cause of martyrdom or suffering) seems not to lie in these *obscure* and *doubtful* cases. The only safe ground of being confident that we suffer for Christ, and for righteousness sake, is when we suffer for what is *clearly* and *plainly* revealed to us in the Gospel. In fine, it is not *every* cause, no nor *every cause which has an immediate reference to religion*, which will make a christian martyr or sufferer within the intention of this text, For ignorance or error may produce an *obstinacy in suffering*, and it deserves no better name when we suffer for a *doubtful* or an *indifferent* opinion, which is either *not clear* from Scripture, or *not material* if it were so. The christian confessor or martyr must be one who suffers either for the profession of Christianity it self, or some truth which is an *express* and *evident* Branch of it as such, and of *great importance* to our faith or manners; or else for the rejecting of some *additional doctrine* impos'd upon him directly contrary to, or not apparently contained in the holy Scriptures; which are to us the only rule of faith, or not to be deduced by clear and natural consequences from them. But righteousness is not confin'd to matter of *faith*, it extends to matter of *practice* also. And therefore,

(2.) By righteousness is meant the *worship of God* in the way of his own appointment, the practice of a *religious* and *holy life* in general, or the discharge of *some particular duty* laid down in holy

Scripture, or rationally inferred from thence; as also the *refusing to do* any thing which is plainly forbidden in the word of God. Thus \* *Daniel* was cast into the lion's den for praying to the true God; and † *Shadrach, Meshech and Abednego* into the fiery furnace, for refusing to worship the idol which the king of *Babylon* had set up. Thus *Cain* slew his brother *Abel*, ‡ *because his own works were evil and his brother's righteous*; and thus St. *Paul* declares, that || *all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution*. This assertion of the Apostle's is the more remarkable, as it is certain he could not mean it by all those who to the end of the world should *make profession of the christian faith*; because in such a sense it is not true; for since Christianity has been received and established by the civil authority, and kings are become the nursing fathers, and queens the nursing mothers of the Church, many millions of Christians (I mean of such as have been baptized and made an outward profession of Christianity) have lived, and daily do live quietly, without danger of persecution upon that account. But in a narrower sense, which the very letter of the text expressly favours, it is and always will be true. All those who are *real and inward* Christians (as well as outwardly so by name and profession,) all who will *live godly in Christ Jesus*, who will be strictly good and religious, and endeavour to acquit themselves in *every* article of their duty, even the most unpopular and unfashionable, must expect to suffer persecution of one sort or other, from a prophane and wicked world. This pious *David* experienc'd long ago. \* *They are my adversaries*, says he, *because I follow the thing that is good*. And many such there are in

\* Dan. vi.

† Dan. iii.

‡ 1 John iii. 12.

|| 2 Tim. iii. 12.

\* Psal. xxxviii. 20.

## CHAP. VII. *for Righteousness sake.* 151

our times, (as the \* Apostle foretold there would be in the latter ages of the Church) who notwithstanding that they own *the form*, deny and even ridicule *the power of godliness*, and hate all serious religion. It is not indeed in their power to torture or put to death good men for their piety and virtue, but they persecute them as far as they can; and how far that is we shall see under the next inquiry. At present it will be enough to say, that whoever suffers purely for the *practice* of religion, the discharge of any *christian duty*, or *refusing to commit any sin*, as undoubtedly suffers for righteousness sake, as if it had been for the *profession of the christian faith*. But here again we must apply the caution given under the former head, that what we take for a *duty* or a *sin*, be capable of a clear and rational proof from holy Scripture that it is so; or else our suffering for the discharge of the one, or refusing to do the other, must not be placed to the account of righteousness. And that our conduct and behaviour in it too be as prudent as possible, and without any just occasion of offence: For if it be otherwise, we do not suffer merely for righteousness sake, but draw it upon our selves, by our own pride, or moroseness, or impertinence, our needless and affected austerities; or some other error in the management of conscience. Nor must we charge our sufferings to the score of religion, if there be any other prevailing mixture in the cause of them; if we have unjustly *provoked* or *injured* those who set themselves against us; or if we have done any thing which is justly *odious* or *reproachful*. For as religious men have still their passions and infirmities about them in too great a measure, 'tis possible the quarrel may be grounded upon somewhat less defensible and generous than their piety; tho' per-



haps their character for this may add some sting to the malignity. But I must hasten to enquire,

*SECONDLY*, What the persecution is which may be expected for righteousness sake. Three sorts of persecution the eleventh verse in my text suggests to us. *First*, That which is most usually so called, and therefore is describ'd no farther than by the word it self, *Blessed are ye when men shall persecute you, &c.* In this are included the being spoiled of our fortunes, driven from our estates, banish'd from our friends and country, (or, which is all one, forced to leave them for our safety) imprison'd, tortur'd, or put to death, for our steady adherence to Christ, and to the religion which he has prescrib'd to us in the Gospel. This was the case of the primitive Christians for 280 years, and upwards, (with very little intermission) from the powers of *heathenism* and *infidelity*; and it has been the case of many thousands of glorious martyrs and confessors in latter ages, who have suffered by the tyranny of *the Church of Rome*, for rejecting the idolatry and superstitions, new articles of faith, and other innovations, introduced by that corrupt usurping See. We in *Great Britain* and *Ireland*, are, blessed be God, at present under such an happy settlement, that we hope to feel no more of *this* sort of persecution; either as Christians or as Protestants. But there is one degree of it, ('tis indeed the lowest, but 'tis persecution still,) which is often suffered, even here, for the sake of *righteousness*, in the second sense of the word; I mean the *malicious ill turns* and *unneighbourly offices*, which such as hate good men for their goodness are ready to do them, upon all occasions; at least if those good men give them any disturbance *in their vices*. For this, though it be a great kindness to the debauched and profligate to endeavour to bring them back to virtue and their senses, is what experience  
shews

shews us they can last of all forgive: To such absurdities are they hurry'd blindfold by that evil spirit which leads them captive at his will, that they ~~shall~~ sooner pardon you any ill usage, than a charitable design to reclaim them; and had rather bear with the *grossest injuries*, than with the *greatest and truest benefit*.

THE *second* sort of persecution is *contempt*, *reproaches*, and *reviling*, whether to our faces or behind our backs. And the *third* is *calumny*, or *slandorous falsehoods* raised to lessen or defame us. That both these last are truly and properly reckon'd persecution, we need no other argument than the text it self; for our Saviour having pronounced his Disciples blessed, when men shall *revile* them, and *shall say all manner of evil against them falsely* for his sake, adds in the next verse, *for SO persecuted they the prophets which were before you*. We shall consider this clause as a *comfort* to us under sufferings by and by; but we may here take notice, that not only the ancient Prophets, but the *Apostles* also, and the *primitive Christians*, underwent both *these* kinds of persecution, as well as the *first* and most notorious instance of it. They were \* *despised, reviled, defamed*, and passed through *evil report, dishonour, and contempt*, as well as other hardships, for the *faith of Christ*; and though the *cause* be somewhat changed (from the righteousness of a *sound belief* to the righteousness of a *conscientious practice*;) the case is still the same to this day. True piety is every where derided, ridiculed and insulted by the prophane and impious, and even the sober moralist too often joins with them in censuring a strict and spiritual life as somewhat more than needs, and impeaching those who profess it of affectation and hypocrisy.

\* 1 Cor. iv. 10, 11, 12. 2 Cor. vi. 8.

I come next to consider,

II. THE *bleffedness* of persons under such a state of perfecution as has been above described. Our Saviour has pronounced them bleffed: But to a carnal worldly mind it seems an unaccountable paradox that they should be so. *To them whose eyes stand out with fatness, and who have their portion in this life,* who place their happiness in ease and honours, in sensual pleasure and enjoyments, it is a strange assertion, that men in exile, poverty, or disgrace, under a load of hatred, calumny, contempt and perfecution, confined to dungeons, toiling under chains, rack'd with tortures, and exposed to cruel deaths, should be happier and more bleffed than they; and stranger still, that their very sufferings should make them so. Yet thus it is, whatever the short-sighted wisdom of this world may conceive to the contrary. The persecuted Christian in the midst of all his sufferings is an happy man, and happy even *because* he suffers. To make this out, we will restrain our selves to the considerations which the text supplies us with, and those are three.

FIRST then, The christian sufferer is happy *in the cause for which he suffers*, the name of Christ, or the profession and practice of christian righteousness. There is a sting in suffering which may very well make us miserable, when we are conscious we deserve it, when we suffer for notorious crimes, or thro' our own imprudencies. St. Peter therefore warns us, \* *Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as a busy-body in other mens matters.* And even when this is not the case, when we have done nothing to deserve the rage

1 Pet. iv. 15.

and

and malice of our enemies, yet if that be all, our comfort is but little in comparison. 'Tis but a cold and negative satisfaction we can take, in barely having *not done ill, or given no just occasion* to those who trouble us: The *pleasure* of suffering lies in this, when it falls upon us merely for doing well, for adhering steadily to our christian profession, to the practice of holiness and virtue, and to the discharge of our duty. † *If any man suffer as a Christian let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf.* It is an honour done us, that we have an opportunity of testifying our affection and fidelity to our Lord and Master, by suffering for his sake. It is Christ who is struck at by the malice of wicked men; him they despise, and his laws and government they would abolish if they were able; but being out of the reach of their insolence, and above their power, those who faithfully adhere to him are in the post of honour; and bear the brunt of this persecution for him, and receive the blows which are aimed at his authority. A faithful and loyal subject *values himself* upon defending his prince's person, or maintaining his authority and government, by suffering upon so glorious an account; he prides himself in losing his estate, his liberty, or his life in such a cause: And shall not we esteem our fidelity to Christ, and what we undergo for our obedience and adherence to him, as highly as in the case of any earthly sovereign? The Apostles did so, when having been imprisoned and scourged by the Jewish Sanhedrim, they went away \* *rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his sake.* St. Paul also † *took pleasure in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses,* upon the same account; and seems to reckon it as an honour and happiness to

† 1 Pet. iv. 16.

\* Acts v. 41.

† 2 Cor. xii. 10.

the *Philippians*, that to them || *it was given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him.* This then is the *first* argument of the blessedness of the suffering Christian, that his persecution is for the sake of Christ, and the discharge of his duty to him.

(2.) THE *second* is, That he has such noble precedents before him, as the Saints and Martyrs in all ages; *for so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you.* This is plainly given in the text as a reason why we should rejoice under all persecution for righteousness sake. If persecution were a path altogether *untrack'd* and *solitary*, as well as rough and difficult; if it were far out of the road of other pious travellers to heaven, a vast and howling desert, where every step we take should be at great uncertainties whether it would bring us right to our journey's end or not, we might be justly struck with horror in our passage; but when, though mountainous and craggy, 'tis nevertheless a *known* and *usual* road, through which many millions of good men have gone before us to eternal rest, 'tis a mighty comfort to us, that we can be assured that the way will lead us right to glory, as it has done others. And not only a *comfort* but an *honour* too, to suffer for the same good cause, and in the same manner, as so many bright examples of faith, and piety, and virtue have already done. For beside the Old Testament Saints, the Prophets and holy men of God, from righteous *Abel* down to *Zacharias*, even *Christ*, \* *the chieftain of our salvation*, † *was made perfect through sufferings.* ‡ *If the world hate you, says he, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.* And many of his faithful soldiers, in all ages since, have passed thro' the same

|| Phil. i. 29.

\* Matth. xxiii. 35.

† Heb. ii. 10.

‡ John xv. 18.

valley of the shadow of death to their perfection and reward. And is it no honour, think ye, to us, to be used as the best and greatest glories of our religion have ever been? Especially when we fall so short of them in that illustrious zeal and piety which made *them* so famous. Is it no honour, both to them and us, *to be partakers of Christ's sufferings*, and conform'd to him who is our Master and our General? \* *It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord: if they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?* But,

(3.) THE *third*, the great and finishing instance of the happiness of persecuted Saints, is *their reward in heaven*. The promise of this, to shew how firmly God is resolved upon it, is twice repeated in the text; *theirs is the kingdom of heaven*, and *great is your reward in heaven*. Well therefore may we not only run *with patience*, but with *joy*, *the race that is set before us*; for the prize of our high calling is a glorious and immortal crown, assured to us by him who has † *all power in heaven and in earth*. The prospect of this viewed with an eye of faith, and conscience well examined, subscribing to the application, is enough to make the suffering Christian happy under the severest storm of malice, and not only happy *under* it, but happy *by* it. Thus ‡ *Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, having respect unto the recompence of the reward*. And the Apostle tells us, that the primitive Christians \* *took joyfully the spoiling of their goods*, as knowing that they had *in heaven, a better and more enduring substance*. But to give this argument its full advantage, we must ob-

\* Mark x. 25.

† Matth xxviii. 18.

‡ Heb. xi. 26.

\* Heb. x. 34.

serve the emphasis laid upon it in the text, — *for GREAT is your reward in heaven.* Eternal happiness had been promised under one special advantage or other, as the reward of almost all those christian virtues mentioned in the preceding Beatitudes; and to every one in such a way of expression, as might best discover the *parity* or *suitableness* of the reward to that which is rewarded. Now to adapt it accordingly in the present case, he assured the persecuted Christian, that as his *virtue*, and his *sufferings* for it upon earth were *great*, so shall also his reward in heaven be: His zeal and love to God, his faith and courage in bearing cheerfully all degrees of persecution as they were thrown upon him, rather than commit any sin, or neglect any duty, are *above the ordinary pitch of goodness*; and therefore his reward should also be a *brighter crown of glory* than other saints enjoy, who have passed through the world with less temptation, fewer trials, and more serenity and ease. And according as his sufferings have been more or less severe in the cause of God and righteousness; as he has gone through *this*, the *other*, or a *third* degree of less considerable, or more difficult and important sufferings for it, and as he has born his sufferings with more or less patience, steadiness, resolution, cheerfulness, or joy, he shall hereafter find his happiness and glory answerable. For so I take the word [*great*] in the text in a comparative sense; their reward shall be *particularly* and *proportionably* great, with respect to other saints, and to their own sufferings.

THAT there are degrees of glory in heaven, is and has been the opinion of most judicious divines; supported not only by arguments from the *nature* and *reasonableness* of the thing, and from the *justice* and *goodness* of God; but by the authority of several places of holy Scripture, which sufficiently

counte-

countenance such a conclusion. The Apostle tells us, *|| He who sows sparingly shall reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully shall reap bountifully.* Our Saviour also intimates as much, where he assures us, that *\* he who receiveth a Prophet as such, shall receive a PROPHET's reward; and he who receiveth a righteous man, as such, shall receive a RIGHTEOUS MAN's reward.* Why this, if there be not a more special reward in heaven for a Prophet, differing in degree from what a righteous or an ordinary good man shall have? So to his Apostles also, when St. Peter pleaded, *† Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?* He returns this answer, *When the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.* Other passages might be insisted on to the same purpose; but these may suffice to shew that there will be a difference made in our portion of happiness hereafter, according to our services, and the degrees of our piety and goodness in this world: And that those generous souls who have struggled with the most opposition and difficulties in their christian warfare, who have bravely signalized their loyalty and love to God, their strict obedience to him, and their active zeal for his honour and interest in the world, amidst a thousand contempts and indignities, sufferings and persecutions, shall be received above with double triumph, and lodged in some of the most honourable mansions of glory. It's true, *‡ the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.* There is no proportion of merit in them at all: But there is a sort of proportion in the equity of divine goodness, that the

*||* 2 Cor. ix. 6.    *\* Matth. x. 41.*    *† Matth. xix. 27, 28.*  
*‡ Rom. viii. 18.*



brightest saint should have the brightest crown, and the greatest sufferer for God the greatest share in his rewards. For though a prince is *not bound* to reward the services or the labours of his soldiers, however hazardous and toilsome, otherwise than by their stated pay, because their military honour and allegiance has already laid an obligation upon them to do their utmost: Yet his goodness, and his love of valour, puts him upon rewarding them for brave and gallant actions, and *the more bravery* they have shewn, the *greater* their *bazards* and *fatigues* have been, and *the more wounds* they have received, *the higher* still his *bounty* rises, the greater honours and rewards he confers upon them. Great reason, therefore, have we (upon such assurances as Christ, our Prince and General, has beforehand given us in the text,) to rejoice in all the hardships we are exposed to for his sake: Which was

III. THE *third* particular observed in the verses now before us; the *duty* of such as are persecuted for righteousness sake; *Rejoice and be exceeding glad*. When we labour under the common afflictions of life, painful diseases, sickness, losses, disappointments, or such disgrace, affronts, hatred, poverty, or other sufferings which are *not brought upon us* by or for the sake of righteousness, we ought to bear them with *patience* and *submission*, as sensible that we have deserved them, or that it is the will of God, for wise and gracious reasons, to inflict or to permit them; but this is not enough for him who suffers *purely as a Christian*, in the cause of God and a good conscience. A great deal more is expected from him than *to be patient* under what he suffers; he must *rejoice* in suffering, as well as bear it calmly; nor must he be only *satisfied* or *pleased* with his persecution, but *exceeding glad of it*, upon account of that peculiar blessedness in it, which we  
have

have considered under the foregoing head. I need not enlarge upon this; for what has been said there is argument enough to excite in us even an holy *ambition* to be in such circumstances, for such a cause, upon the prospect given us by our Saviour, of such a great and glorious recompence. Let us therefore \* *rejoice, inasmuch as we are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when his glory shall be revealed, we may be glad with exceeding joy. For † if we suffer, we shall also be glorified, and reign together with him.*

\* 1 Pet. iv. 13.

† Rom. viii. 17. 2 Tim. ii. 12.



## CH A P. IX.

### Of EXEMPLARINESS.

MATTH. V. 13, 14, 15, 16.

*Ye are the salt of the earth; but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.*

*Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.*

*Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel: but on a candlestick, and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.*

N

Let

*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*



HIS first paragraph is an exhortation to be *exemplary* in our religion, enforced by several comparisons; which shew that God by calling us to the profession of Christianity, *designs and marks us out* for good examples of virtue and holiness to the world, that such examples *may do much service*; and that men who know the excellence of that religion we profess, *will certainly expect them from us*. Let me therefore open to you the true meaning of what our Saviour has delivered, in the four verses now under consideration, by supposing him to have express'd it in the following manner.

“ I have told you, my Disciples, that if ye will  
 “ indeed be followers of me, ye shall be blessed  
 “ and happy. The very practice of what I require  
 “ will make you so; and the future rewards of  
 “ your obedience will more than answer all your  
 “ pains and all your expectations. But this is an  
 “ argument from your interest only; there are o-  
 “ ther and more generous motives yet behind. 'Tis  
 “ fit that as you see I have provided for your hap-  
 “ piness, ye should so live as may be for my glory.  
 “ If ye live not more strictly and virtuously in eve-  
 “ ry point than the generality of men, the world  
 “ will think, I either taught you no better, or  
 “ that ye despise my teaching, both which will be  
 “ dishonourable to me. But if ye live as I have  
 “ taught you, they will say *that God is in you of a*  
 “ *truth*; they will commend that excellent institu-  
 “ tion I deliver you, and will be drawn to love  
 “ and to embrace that doctrine, and those manners  
 “ which are so much the ornament and the happi-  
 ness

“ nels of those who do embrace them. I know  
 “ however the force of truth is such, that when  
 “ they hear my Gospel preach’d, and read the laws  
 “ which I have given you, they will own the ex-  
 “ cellence of my moral precepts, and will be sure  
 “ to expect that ye who acknowledge me to be  
 “ your Master, should *do the things that I say*;  
 “ and should be as much better than other men,  
 “ as my instructions are beyond the virtue of the  
 “ *Gentile* or the *Jewish* schools. When they talk  
 “ of any part of righteousness, they will naturally  
 “ look to you for an example, as the religion ye  
 “ profess obliges you; the intention whereof is  
 “ more than a mere *inward faith*, and secret piety;  
 “ it is to make you *eminently*, as well as *really*  
 “ good, and to set you up as publick patterns to  
 “ mankind. Consider your selves therefore, as the  
 “ *salt of the earth*, by whose spiritual conversation  
 “ all who know you, may be seasoned with a due  
 “ relish and tincture of christian piety and good-  
 “ ness. But if ye become insipid and useless, ye  
 “ will be the worst and the most contemptible of  
 “ all men. Consider your selves as the *light of the*  
 “ *world*, a candle set on a candlestick, for the di-  
 “ rection and use of all that are about you, and as  
 “ design’d by your heavenly Father and me, to  
 “ light men out of the ways of ignorance and  
 “ vice, and shew them by your bright examples  
 “ the way to truth and holiness, and eternal glory.  
 “ Consider that the eyes of all men will be upon  
 “ you as professing such an holy institution. Whatever  
 “ ye do will be observed, and can no more be hid  
 “ than a *city that stands on a hill*: and therefore  
 “ as ye declare your selves to be my Disciples, let the  
 “ light of your strict and virtuous lives so shine be-  
 “ fore men, that they seeing your good works,  
 “ and admiring the excellent and useful spirit of  
 “ Christianity, as it appears in you, may glorify

“ *your Father which is in heaven*, and chearfully  
 “ subscribe to worship and obey him as ye do.

ALL this I take to be the true design and meaning of our Saviour's precept here, and the reason upon which it is grounded. Let us now consider more distinctly,

I. WHAT those good works are, wherein it is expected we should become examples to all about us.

II. WHAT it is to be exemplary in those good works.

III. WHO they are, that are concerned to be thus exemplary in good works.

IV. HOW they may be said to glorify God thereby.

I. WHAT those good works are wherein it is expected we should become examples to all about us. They are in general the sincere and constant practice of the whole christian religion, but particularly of such duties and virtues as have been recommended to us in the foregoing Beatitudes. As,

(1.) HUMILITY, thinking and speaking modestly of our selves; and of every thing relating to us; despising no man; condescending to those below us; being courteous to all, and ready to give place, not only where *it is due*, but sometimes where *it is not*, rather than contend for it: Sitting loose to all enjoyments of the world, not ambitious of power, or covetous of riches; not vain and haughty if we have them; nor eager in desiring more; but content with our condition whatever it is; bearing poverty without murmuring, and contempt without resentment.

(2.) AN hearty sorrow for all *our own sins*, expressed in a ready compliance with the discipline of the Church, and a careful avoidance of all temptations

tations for the future. A charitable *concern*, or a compassionate *grief* for the *sins* or the *calamities* of *others*, but a great calmness and moderation with regard to any temporal evils of our own.

(3.) MEEKNESS under all sufferings from the hand of God or men. Obedience and reverence to the king, to magistrates, to parents, husbands, masters, or any other to whom we should be subject. Obliging behaviour and respect to friends. Forbearance, patience, and doing good to enemies: Giving no wilful offence or provocation to any body. Not given to positiveness or contradiction. Not railing at or speaking evil of others, but covering the faults of our neighbours in conversation, and putting the best construction upon every thing that it will bear. And lastly, all manner of gentleness towards those who are under our government, or any way below us.

(4.) A generous aim at perfection, a mind not satisfied with any certain stint of goodness, but catching at all opportunities of growing wiser and better every day. Frequenting the *publick prayers* and *sermons* at Church, and that with a severe and close attention, a regular and decent piety, receiving as often as we can, the *sacrament of the Lord's supper*: keeping up the exercise of religion also in our families by prayer, reading, and good instructions. And together with all this, a prudent and industrious zeal to make religion flourish in our neighbourhood, or where-ever else we can promote it.

(5.) A merciful disposition to pity, support, and do all the good we can, to such as are in want and poverty, or any other affliction; *weeping with those that weep*, being *kind and tender hearted*; charitably giving or lending as there is occasion: Releasing debts where an honest minded debtor is not able to pay; helping the oppressed and fatherless to their right, so far as it is in our power; and punishing

offenders (when the law calls for it) in such a manner as will shew us far from an ill-natur'd delight in punishing.

(6.) AN honest simplicity in all our words and actions, without any disguise or double meanings, being sincere in all our friendships and all our civilities; fair and ingenious in all our dealings, plain and open in our promises, and just to the performance of them. A strict *purity* in conversation, avoiding every thing obscene or indecent; a chastity in our behaviour, free from not only all actual lewdness, but from all lascivious steps towards it. A constant course of *temperance* and *sobriety*, abhorring even the most remote degrees of drunkenness.

(7.) A peaceable temper with regard both to the Church and state; detesting all manner of schisms in the one, and factions in the other; and labouring so far as it may be any way in our power, to prevent or put an end to such disturbances, not affecting novelty, not raising a dust against every thing we do not like; but attending impartially to arguments on either side, complying as far as we can, or retaining our different sentiments with charity and good nature; endeavouring also in our neighbourhood to make peace amongst others; and, \* *as much as in us lies, to live peaceably with all men.*

(8.) CONSTANCY under persecutions; † *holding fast the form of sound words*, the faith and doctrine of the Gospel; going on with resolution and courage, in the discharge of every christian duty, whatever sufferings, reproach, or danger may lie before us; and rejoicing under all, as having an eye to the blessed recompence of reward.

THESE, and such other virtues and graces, make up that *light* which is to *shine before men*, the character of an accomplished exemplary Chris-

\* Rom. xii. 18.

† 2 Tim. i. 13.

tian. And can there be a more beautiful character in the world? Can there be a more illustrious ornament to human nature, than one thus uniformly good?

LET us now consider,

II. WHAT it is to be *exemplary* in these good works; or what it is that is expected from us more than ordinary, with regard to them. And here,

(1.) WE must labour to be *eminent* in every virtue; not only to have more virtues than the generality of men, but to practise them in a greater height and perfection. We must do something *extraordinary* in religion; not contenting our selves with the common degrees of goodness, or with just so much as may serve to satisfy the clamours of conscience, or be sufficient, as we think, to bring us to heaven. We must endeavour to be more humble, more meek, and peaceable, and merciful, &c. than those who have some reputation in the world for being so. We must thus behave our selves, not only when there is no great temptation to the contrary, or when an occasion happens to us in the common road of things, but in the most difficult and trying instances we must give a proof by our outward carriage, that the virtue we pretend to is owing to an inward principle, and is really habitual to us from the power and influence of our religion.

(2.) THE setting a good example necessarily implies that our virtues should be *visible and conspicuous to the world*. But here lies a material difficulty, so to manage this point, as that pride and hypocrisy shall have no share in it. For our Saviour cannot be thought to tolerate hereby (much less to require) that pharisaical vanity and ostentation, which in so many other passages he condemns



with all the earnestness imaginable. The meaning therefore of this precept, *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works*, cannot be, that our own glory and reputation should be the principle of what we do; or that we should have any design at all upon the esteem of men, so far as it concerns our selves. It is the virtue, and the divine institution of Christianity, from which that virtue flows, and not the virtuous *man*, which we should labour to recommend to the esteem of men by our lives. It is that they may *glorify our Father which is in heaven*, as the latter part of the verse sufficiently explains it. The glory of God and the good of men, must be our only aim in producing our virtues or good actions to the publick view. We must avoid, as much as is possible, all selfish and unworthy schemes of *applause, respect, or private interest* in them; referring all the *honour to God*, the Author and Inspirer of whatever good we can attain to; and designing *all the benefit* (or over and above our own salvation) *to the souls of others*, who may thereby be wrought upon to come into the same good measures of virtue and religion, which they see us practise, and by consequence be brought at length to the same eternal happiness which we hope for.

OUR next enquiry (tho' it may seem in part prevented) will demand some necessary enlargements. Let us consider therefore,

III. *WHO* they are that are thus concerned to be *exemplary in good works*. *All Christians* in general, every one who has professed himself by baptism a disciple of the holy *Jesus*, is obliged by this precept to exemplariness; for it is to \*these (and not to his Apostles only, or the clergy) that our Lord

\* Vid. *Introduction to Vol. I.*

directs himself in this whole sermon: And therefore we find the very same comparison or metaphor which is here made use of, *light and shining*, apply'd expressly by St. Paul to every Christian, as such; for so he exhorts the *Philippians*, *That ye be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, amongst whom ye SHINE as LIGHTS in the world.* Every Christian, let his station or circumstances be what they will, whether he be a publick or a private person, known to many or to few, is to look upon himself as obliged to be *\* holy in all manner of conversation, as he that has called him is holy*; and make it his business so to live, as may be a credit to the religion he pretends to. This, by his very profession of Christianity, is expected from him at all times, and in all places; but more especially when he lives among heathens, and other infidels, strangers or enemies to the name of CHRIST, who will be generally apt to form their judgment of our religion rather by the influence it has upon our consciences and practice, than by its own truth and moral excellence. They hear it called indeed an holy religion, an institution of great and glorious virtues (and such it certainly is) but when they cast their eyes upon *our lives*, and observe, that instead of all this holiness and virtue, that should follow there, we are *no better than themselves*, and too often (I fear it may be said) much worse; will it not be a most dreadful prejudice to Christianity? Let all who travel abroad to such parts of the world where our religion is not known or not received; all who go to reside in our foreign factories and plantations, consider this precept of our Lord, as more immediately affecting *them*. Let it be their care above all things so to live, † *as becomes the*

\* 1 Pet. i. 15.

† Phil. i. 27.

Gospel of Christ, \* *having their conversation honest among the Gentiles, that by their good works which they shall behold, they may glorify God in the day of visitation*; and be ready to embrace, when preached to them, that holy faith, that pure and perfect law, which shines so bright in practice. But if they live contrary to it, they disgrace themselves, and their religion too; they make Christianity to be abhorred, the † *name of GOD and CHRIST to be blasphemed among the Gentiles; and wo to him by whom the offence cometh*. The case is much the same with such as live in a vicious neighbourhood, where Christianity is profess'd, but little or nothing of the true spirit of it to be seen. Those few who are good in such a place, have need to be *exemplary* in goodness, and have peculiar obligations upon them so to be. That Christian who by the grace of God has withdrawn himself from the evil customs and practices of the wicked world about him, and makes profession to live more strictly to his Saviour's rules; to be more sober, virtuous, and religious, than those others, and those much the greater number, who own the † *name of CHRIST, but in their works deny him*, is very deeply concern'd to give a great and eminent example of all sorts of virtue. To be indifferently or obscurely good, is but a barren, I had almost said a contemptible character *in him*. GOD and the world expect much more from him, or the one will have but little glory, and the other but little benefit by his example. He is bound in *point of honour*, as well as conscience, to *excel*, as he pretends to be more effectually convinced than others, of the excellency of the christian law, and the reasonableness and necessity of living up to it. But to proceed, tho' *all Christians*

\* 1 Pet. ii. 12.  
Mat. xviii. 7.

† Rom. ii. 24. 1 Tim. vi. 1.  
† Tit. i. 16.

in whatever station are bound to be exemplary, that others may be drawn to goodness, and encouraged in it, there are some whose *order, rank, and circumstances* in the world, will carry the light of their good works much farther, and by the more extensive influence; or at least the greater power and weight of their examples, may glorify GOD more effectually, than such as have not those advantages. Amongst these I reckon,

(1.) *PRINCES* and *great men*, all whose birth and quality, estate or reputation, make them regarded above the general level of mankind. 'Tis evident by long experience, that the example of such as I have now mention'd, has force enough to bring either virtue or vice *into fashion*. These are indeed a city set on an hill, which cannot be hid; whatever good or ill they do, will be observ'd by every body, and talk'd of far and near. And as 'tis impossible to *conceal* their moral character, because the station they are in exposes it whether they will or no; 'tis almost as impossible to defeat the influence it is likely to have on the morality of others. Whatever the *prince* is, the court will either be or seem to be, because of their dependance and expectation from him. Whatever the *court* is, the city and country gentlemen will be apt to imitate, and to endeavour to recommend themselves by putting on the courtiers virtues or vices. The common-people look upon the *nobility* and *gentry*, who live amongst them, as their patterns, right or wrong, and by a natural pride are prone to *value themselves* upon doing as *they* do. It is therefore of exceeding great consequence, that these men of note and figure should set good examples: For probably nothing of mere human means would tend more effectually to reform the age, than such examples, general and continued, as 'tis certain the contrary tends more than any thing to debauch it.

(2.) THE

(2.) THE clergy in all stations and degrees, are peculiarly bound in *decency*, as well as *duty*, to live up to what they preach. The world is so well satisfied in this, that the clamour of their country will assuredly follow them, if they do not; and nothing gives a more popular scandal to religion, than the vicious lives of such, as by their very function and office are sent forth to be *preachers* of righteousness. 'Tis true, that if they set an ill example, it is no excuse for despising or neglecting the holy precepts, which, by authority from Christ who sends them, they deliver; for let them *live* as they will, yet if they give us from the pulpit the true faith and doctrine of the Gospel; what they preach, and not what they practise, is certainly the rule by which we shall be judged for eternity. Our Saviour has plainly taught us to distinguish thus, in his remark upon the *Scribes and Pharisees*:  
*\* The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses seat. All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do, but do not after their works, for they say and do not.* Yet the obligation upon the christian clergy, to live up strictly to their doctrine, is as strong as Scripture and reason can make it. St. Paul charges Timothy, *† Be thou an example of believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in faith, in purity.* And St. Peter gives it, as a general order to all elders or presbyters, that they should be *‡ Ensamples to the FLOCK, that when the chief Shepherd shall appear, they may receive a crown of glory which fadeth not away.* As for their obligation from *reason*, there needs no other argument for their *exemplariness*, than that a character for virtue and piety will be of mighty advantage to them in the discharge of one great part of their

\* Matth. xxiii. 2, 3.

† 1 Tim. iv. 12.

‡ 1 Pet. v. 3, 4.

office, that of *persuasion*; for no man can be a good preacher, who is not *remarkable* for a good life and conversation; a reputation for virtue being of great use to an orator, in gaining upon the affections of any auditory. *Virgil* makes the authority of such a speaker, of force enough to appease the anger of an enraged multitude.

*Tum pietate gravem, ac meritis si forte virum quem  
Conspexere, silent, arrectisque auribus astant,  
Ille regit dictis animos, & pectora mulcet.*

(3.) ANOTHER order of men, whom I reckon to be under special obligations to an exemplary life, is magistrates; such as, by whatever titles, are entrusted with the execution of either the civil or ecclesiastical laws of their country. The legal punishment of vice, so far as it falls within the lash of canon or statute, is, doubtless, as much a part of their business as any other. They are the *\*Ministers of God, revengers to execute wrath upon him that doth evil*; sent by him with this express commission, *for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well*. If this be their office, as it certainly is, ought not *they* in point of *honour* and *justice*, to set examples to those they govern, of all those virtues which their commission ties them to protect and recommend?

(4.) *PARENTS* and *masters of families* are peculiarly obliged, though their good example be contracted within a narrower observation, to let it shine as far as it can, for it may be of great importance. *Children*, from that natural love implanted in them towards their parents, are almost necessarily led to the imitation of what they hear *them* say, and see *them* do. And servants, inured

\* Rom. xiii. 4.

by the constant familiarity of every day's attendance upon them, will be apt to take the strongest impressions from *their* example, and to practise accordingly, when they set forward in the world themselves. If a parent or master shews himself pious and virtuous in all his conversation, 'tis to be hop'd, that all his dependants will hereafter, in their several families, pursue the same good methods of keeping up religion by daily prayers, and reading of the holy Scriptures, by a serious observation of the Lord's day, and bringing their children and servants constantly to Church, in which themselves have been train'd up, and propagating it to late posterity.

THERE remains now only the fourth general head to be considered; and that is,

IV. *HOW we may be said to glorify God by our good works.* God is essential and eternal glory, to be himself is to be infinitely glorious, and glorious only from himself. His justice, his mercy, his power, his wisdom, his truth, his unchangeableness, his every attribute, is a distinct and perpetual ray, and such an abundant stream of glory from his own divine and excellent nature, as renders it impossible, for either men or angels, in a strict sense, to glorify him; that is, to add any new honour or lustre to him, by any thing they can say or do. But though we cannot make him more glorious than he is, we may *so declare his glory* to our fellow-creatures, both by our words and actions, as may make them more deeply sensible of it, and draw them to the like acknowledgment and admiration of him. And in this sense, I suppose it is, that we are so frequently enjoined to \* *glorify God*, and to † *do all to the glory of God*. And we are

\* Rom. xv. 6.

† 1 Cor. x. 13.

told, not only in this paragraph of our Saviour's sermon, but in several other places of the New Testament, that God is pleased to look upon himself as then especially glorified by us, when by an holy conversation, fruitful in good works, we imitate him, and live according to his laws: † *Herein is my Father glorified*, says Christ, *that ye bear much fruit*. So St. Paul also, ‖ *Being fill'd with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Christ Jesus unto the glory and praise of God*. And St. Peter exhorts Christians, so to behave themselves amongst the Gentiles, † *That by their good works, which these shall behold, they may glorify God in the day of visitation*. Now God is glorified by our good works; or, in other terms, we do by our good works set forth the glory of God, and recommend him to the veneration and esteem of our fellow-creatures.

(1.) As he is our *Creator*. He made mankind in his own image, and stamp'd upon him the impressions of his own holiness, goodness, and beneficence. By the fall we became wretchedly degenerate, and lost this likeness to him in which we were created; but by the assistance of his grace given unto us in the new Covenant by Jesus Christ, we are enabled in some measure to recover it; and the more holy our conversations are, and the more beneficent we are to others, the more honourably we represent our great Creator, whose image we were made to bear. Whatever goodness we have, must necessarily be derived from him: for the *moral*, as well as natural excellence of our being, can be no more our own primary act or improvement, than our being it self. If so, the glorious God who made us must be infinitely good, or he could not have communicated any thing of goodness to us.

† John xv. 8.

‖ Phil. i. 11.

† 1 Pet. iii. 12.



By our good works therefore, we represent, tho' imperfectly, the goodness of God who has stamp'd his own image upon us, and who has qualified us for, and incites us to the practise of them. We glorify God thereby, as we lead men to the consideration of him, as the fountain of every excellence, the *\*author of every good and perfect gift*; the main spring of all the benefits which men receive from us, from *one another*, or from the ministration of any other creature, as well as from the immediate hand of his own Providence. But,

(2.) By our holy conversation and good works, we also set forth the glory of God as our *redeemer*, and *law-giver*. We are expressly told by St Paul, what the design of our redemption was: Christ *†gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works*. And in another place, that *‡we are created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them*. Now when we answer the design of our redemption, and walk in that order, and in the practise of those things which are prescribed to us thereupon, we may be said to glorify our redeemer, as we publickly justify his undertaking, acknowledge our selves to have been in a state of misery and condemnation, confess the necessity of his redeeming love, and that the method which he has appointed, is the only way to be safe and happy. By our ready compliance with him on his own terms, we necessarily imply all this, and by embracing the strict conditions of holiness, purely at his direction, against the current of our sensual appetites, our natural passions, and our worldly interests; we plainly declare our estimation and veneration of him; we subscribe to the wisdom of the

\* James i. 17.    † Tit. ii. 14.    ‡ Eph. ii. 10.

law-giver, and to the excellence of his laws, and we recommend them by our example to the liking and obedience of others, as holy, just and good.

AND thus it is, that by our good works we glorify God. We add no glory to him, which he had not infinitely and essentially in himself before: But we declare his glory to the world, and recommend him to the love and admiration of our fellow creatures. Let us therefore, as we are bound by all the ties of gratitude and duty to God, and by the interest of our eternal hopes, so cause the light of our christian and holy conversation to shine before men, that they seeing our good works, may glorify our Father which is in heaven.



## C H A P. X.

*Of the Excellence of the Christian Morality above that of the Jews.*

MATTH. V. 17, 18, 19, 20.

*Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the Prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.*

*For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.*

O

*Whosoever*

*Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do, and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.*

*For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*



UR blessed Saviour being now about to correct certain errors, which were crept into the morality of the Jews; to enforce some duties, which were not before look'd upon as obligatory, and to explain others which were not rightly understood; thought it necessary to usher in these improvements with a protestation, that he was *not come to destroy, but to fulfil the law and the Prophets*; lest either the Jews, who were always jealous of any innovations in their law, should be prejudiced against, and offended at him, as derogating from their institution; or lest his own Disciples should think, that because he gave them new precepts, he made void their obligation to the ancient scriptural morality. He therefore adds, *For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, &c.* as though he should say, "The moral law, the precepts of piety, and virtue, which ye have received from *Moses and the Prophets*, are of perpetual force, and your obligation to them cannot by any means be dissolved, till the world it self, and all things in it, have an end. Whosoever therefore shall pretend a liberty from my institution, to slight the least of those commandments; and to teach men that  
" they

“ they may do so , will find himself in a fatal error; for he shall never enter into that eternal glory, which is the reward of pious and obedient souls: But they, and they only, who adhere both in their life and doctrine to them, shall be received into the kingdom of heaven. For so far am I from abrogating any of those duties, and virtues, which your doctors teach you from that law, that whatever they bid you observe with regard thereto, I also require you to observe and do; and not only so, but I tell you plainly, that ye have *much more* to practise than they teach you; and whosoever from henceforward shall expect eternal happiness, they must go beyond the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, both in the righteousness of their lives, and their instructions too.

IN farther explaining of this paragraph, there will be no necessity of enlarging upon the meaning of these words, *Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the Prophets, I am not come to destroy*, because they will be clearly and fully explained, from what will be said on the two following heads.

I. WHAT must be here understood by our Saviour's *fulfilling* the law and the Prophets.

II. IN what instances our righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*.

I. *WHAT* must be here understood by our Saviour's *fulfilling* the law and the Prophets. Our blessed Saviour may be said to have fulfilled the Prophets, in that he accomplished all things, which the Prophets foretold of him. Hence we meet with this expression frequently in the Evangelists, *That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Prophets*. And he may be said to have fulfilled the law,

law, in that he transgressed no one commandment of the law. For thus he speaks of himself to the Jews, † *Which of you convinceth me of sin?* And thus to his Disciples, ‖ *The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.* But the meaning of his fulfilling the law and the Prophets, in this place, is according to the sense of the Fathers and best expositors, that he *completed and perfected* the moral law delivered to the Jews by Moses and the Prophets; refining upon the several precepts of it, and extending them to such a compass of obligation, as was either wanting or undiscover'd there before. To clear this matter it will be requisite to shew,

(1.) THAT the Jewish moral law was not designed by God to be the last and most perfect revelation of his will: But that the farther improvement and perfection thereof, was reserved for the times of the Messiah. Tho' the Almighty, to keep up the knowledge of himself as the only true God, call'd the posterity of Jacob to be his peculiar people; and to assert his right of government, delivered them a law by Moses; yet he dealt with them therein as a hard-hearted stubborn race, receptive only of the outward forms of religion, but averse to the spiritual and inward substance of it. For this reason their law turn'd chiefly upon *pompous ceremonies*, and *external observations*; that the parade and splendor of idolatry in the countries round them, might make the less impression upon the fancy of a people; that knew not how to relish a plain and simple way of worship; and that the mystical prescriptions of *heathenism* might not attract their consciences, who were exceedingly inclined to superstition. They had also several *political* constitutions laid down to regulate them as a separate state;

† John viii. 46.

‖ John xiv. 30.

and some few *moral precepts*: But these last so *sparingly* delivered, and in such *general terms*, as shews they were only to lead the way to a future and fuller instruction, a compleater revelation which should be made by the *Messiah*. For that such a revelation more compleat and perfect was reserved for Christ, even *Moses*, their own great law-giver, foretold, and charged them strictly with obedience to it. \**The Lord said unto me, —I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words into his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words, which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.* This is expressly in the † New Testament applied to Christ; and what is here said, that he should be *like unto Moses*, imports, that he should be a Law-giver to his people, as *Moses* was, the Author of a new dispensation and revelation of the will of God. And the excellency of his law is intimated in that expression, *I will put MY WORDS in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them ALL that I SHALL COMMAND him.* It's true, the law of *Moses* was the *word of God*, and he delivered nothing but by *command from him*: Yet as this prophecy is most visibly in the intention of it, a *gracious promise*, and a great signification of the divine favour, as also a *second instance of extraordinary revelation*, it must in reason be supposed, to be more perfect and excellent than the former: For if it was not, if they had not sufficient instruction by the law of *Moses*, where would be the benefit that should make it the proper subject of a promise? If a second revelation be not more perfect than the first, there would be no need of it. And that this more

\* Deut. xviii. 17, 18, 19. † Acts iii. 22. Acts vii. 37.

perfect revelation promised here by *Moses*, and reserved for that great Prophet whom he speaks of, has reference more especially to the *moral law*, and to the improvements that should be made therein, appears from the declared \* *occasion* of making that promise to the *Jews*. It is grounded upon the terror that the people were under from the thundrings and lightnings, the sound of the trumpet, and other awful signals of God's presence, when he spake to them from mount *Horeb*, or *Sinai*; and their desire thereupon, that God would no more reveal himself in that dreadful manner to them. God approved their request, and promised he would for the future deliver his commands by *Moses*, and after him more fully by the *Messiah*. Now when was it that God so spake to them, and his terrors made them so afraid, but when the † *ten commandments*, or the *moral law*, was delivered? Which plainly intimates that the *Messiah* should in after ages enlarge, explain, and perfect those commandments. I will therefore now proceed to shew,

(2.) THAT Christ did thus *improve the moral law of Moses, and the Prophets*; and that,

1. As to the *doctrinal* and *perceptive* part of it, in several instances, which were either wanting in the former dispensation, or at least unknown and undiscover'd there; and not obligatory, till they were revealed by him in the christian system. For proof of this I shall need to have recourse no farther than to his sermon on the mount, which is now under our consideration. And I shall but just name the instances, because they will be treated of more largely in their proper place. The third commandment, which the *Jews* restrain'd to the cases of blasphemy and perjury, he has extended to all prophane, and rash or needless swearing. The

\* Deut. xviii. 16.

† Exod. xx. 18, 19.

sixth, against murder, he has enlarged to a prohibition of all causeless and immoderate anger or resentments, tho' only cherish'd in the breast; but if they proceed so far as to vent themselves in passionate and reviling language, he has represented to us what was before unknown, the sinfulness and danger thereof with regard to the punishments of another world: And the necessity of reconciliation with an offended brother, in order to the acceptance of our prayers with God. Upon the seventh commandment, which the *Jews* thought concern'd only the outward and compleat acts of lewdness, he has introduced an interpretation, that makes the very looking upon a woman with lustful fancy and desires, criminal. The permission of divorce, which for the hardness of their hearts the law of *Moses* had indulged them, our Saviour has restrained to the case of fornication only, and reduced the sacred ties of marriage to their original strictness. Retaliation of injuries had been allowed by the *Mosaic* law; but Christ has here forbidden it, commands us to love our enemies, and to return good for evil. In these, and several other precepts, which might be gathered out of this sermon, and from other parts of the Gospel, our Lord has raised the duty of a Christian to such a pitch of excellence, as the *Jewish* morality knew little or nothing of. But this was not all the advantages introduced above the law of *Moses*. For,

2. HE improved the moral law in respect of the *sanction* also, the *promises* and *encouragements* annex'd to the observance of it; viz. the *assistance of the holy Spirit of grace*, the *full and free remission of sins*, the *reward of everlasting life*, and the *penalty* incurred by obstinate disobedience, *eternal misery in hell*. The *Jews* had no such *promises* made them of *divine assistance by the holy Spirit*, to enable them to obey, as we thro' the mercy of God



in Christ abundantly enjoy under the christian law. Tho' it is not to be doubted, that all good men amongst the *Jews* were enlightned and assisted by the holy Spirit of God, for of our selves we can do nothing; and even bad men restrained by the same Spirit from being worse; yet this was not the matter of any *formal and explicit promise* under that dispensation; nor were those blessed influences so freely, frequently, and eminently poured out, as since the coming of our Saviour. *Remission of sins* was but sparingly proposed to them, at no small trouble and expence in sacrifices; and even this was still but for offences of a second rank. But there were many greater evils, from which the criminal *Jew* could not be justified by the law of *Moses*: for in the twentieth chapter of *Leviticus*, and elsewhere, we find excision threatned to several impieties, either by the immediate hand of God, or by the magistrate. In these cases the *Jew* had no place left for expiatory sacrifices, tho' God might nevertheless, where true repentance intervened, be merciful to him in another world, thro' the intended future sacrifice of Christ. And to this after-dispensation by Christ, was reserved that general and publick promise of pardon for all sins, even blasphemy it self; except the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. This our Saviour himself proclaimed while he was on earth, and commanded his Apostles also, that \* *repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name amongst all nations, beginning at Jerusalem*; who accordingly published this great advantage of the Gospel where-ever they came, declaring, that † *all who believe are justified by Christ from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses*. Again, what *Moses* and the Prophets promised to the *Jews* for their

\* Mat. xii. 31. Luke xxiv. 47.

† Acts xiii. 39.  
obedience,

*obedience*, was only with regard to this present life; a long and happy establishment in the land of *Canaan*, the outward blessings of providence, health and riches, a numerous posterity, a fruitful soil, a flourishing and prosperous state. And what they *threatned upon disobedience*, was only oppression from their enemies, captivity, a temporal death, and other things contrary to the rewards just mentioned. But the Gospel rewards and punishments are of infinitely greater consequence, even *eternal life and happiness in heaven*, or *everlasting misery in hell*. It was Christ who brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel. He clear'd the doctrine of the resurrection both by arguments and instances, by raising others from the dead, and rising again himself. He repeated and confirm'd the promises of it in plainer expressions, revealed the future judgment, and described the state of the just and unjust which should follow thereupon, as far as was any ways necessary to guard the observance of his precepts, to excite men to piety and virtue, by the assurance of a crown of never fading glory, joy, and peace in heaven, to the obedient; and deter men from the love and practice of sin by the most dreadful and perpetual punishments that will attend it in another world. And by all this added a strength and sanction to the christian law, very far above that of the *Jewish*.

3. AND lastly, He improved it in the *extent and compass of its jurisdiction*, or the number of subjects under the obligation of it. The law of *Moses* was given but to one particular nation, and demanded not obedience from any other, except those few religious foreigners who should from time to time become voluntary proselytes. The rest of the world were left to live by the dictates of mere natural conscience, and the dim light of reason, sometimes improved, but oftner perplex'd by the various and  
uncertain

uncertain schemes of philosophy. But the Church of God, which for so many ages was confined to a corner of the earth, the land of *Canaan*, was to be extended to all nations without distinction, when the Messiah should appear. His law was to be universal, and to oblige the whole race of mankind. And no law could be better fitted for that purpose: The whole burden of ceremonies being laid aside, the institution of Christ is such as flows from natural and eternal right; is agreeable to the reason and capacity of all mankind; a plain and practicable institution; and the fittest of any that could be contrived to suit with all the various circumstances of those that are to be governed by it; and to make all societies, under what political form soever, safe and happy in the due observance of it. This revelation therefore was in its own nature too great, too general a blessing to be engrossed by any one particular people. 'Twas adapted to the good of *all*, and *all who would* should have the benefit of it: For so the Prophets long before Christ came had prophesied: \* *Behold my servant, whom I uphold, says God, mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my Spirit upon him, he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not fail nor be discouraged till he have judgment in the earth, and the isles shall wait for his law.* Accordingly the Apostles of Christ were sent by him with a general commission to preach the Gospel in *all nations*; not only in † *Jerusalem*, and in all *Judea*, and in *Samaria*, but unto the ‡ *uttermost part of the earth*. And this, blessed be God, we find in a great part accomplished, and wait for the more compleat accomplishment thereof, when the || *fulness of the Gentiles shall come in*. Having now discharged my self

\* Isa. xlii. 1, 4.

† Luke xxiv. 47.

‡ Acts i. 8.

|| Rom. xi. 25.

of the first general head, and shewn you, that by our Saviour's fulfilling the law and the Prophets, is here meant his perfecting the *moral law*; which not only needed, but expected such an improvement from the *Messiah*, and actually receiv'd it, as ye have seen in many particulars; I must now direct your thoughts to consider,

II. IN what instances our righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees.

(1.) WE must go upon a right *bottom* and *foundation of practice*; we must not mistake and do unrighteous things for righteous. The Scribes and Pharisees, notwithstanding that they were teachers of the law of God, were notoriously under this fundamental error; they *trusted in themselves that they were righteous*, pretended not only *more than others*, but even *exclusively of others*, to that excellent character; and yet the zeal, which they made such a figure with, was but so much the greater a violation of the true righteousness, because they mistook in the application of it; under a false idea of *serving God* they *persecuted the Son of God*, and with the utmost bitterness rejected the only true religion, for religion's sake. St. Paul also, while he continued a Pharisee, did the same, supposing himself the more righteous for his severity against the Christians; for, says he, *\* I verily thought with my self, that I OUGHT to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth*. And so he testifies of his countreymen the Jews in general, that they had *† a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge*. It was an ignorant zeal, and wrong grounded, mistaking evil for good, and good for evil. 'Tis easy to discern how fatal such a mistake

\* Acts xxvi. 9.

† Rom. x. 2.

must be, and that the greater progress men make in such a sort of righteousness, the farther they are wandering from the true way to heaven. But the Scribes and Pharisees are not the only bigots that have been thus mistaken. The histories of the Church, and the experience of late and present ages can shew, that the same spirit of delusion has possess'd too many *Christians*; who having first been drawn aside into errors of the greatest consequence, have under the notion of righteousness, not only obstinately defended and improved those errors, but furiously press'd them upon others; imagining all this while, that by inhumanity they were doing God good service. Others there are, who, having cherish'd in themselves many weak and unreasonable scruples, have wrought their minds to such an acquired blindness, as to make a *duty* of a *notorious sin*, and maintain *schism* and *disorder*, even by dint of *conscience*. It is of the utmost moment therefore, that we should guard against such dreadful mistakes; and be sure that what we do under the supposition of righteousness, be *really* such according to the rule of righteousness, which God has given us.

(2.) THE *design* and *end* of our good actions must be righteous also; for where this is wanting, there is a defect in the very life and substance of the duty. Where the *intention* is indirect, and what we do is but the issue of some secret schemes for reputation or secular interest, there may be *policy* in it, but there is no *religion*; our righteousness is no better than that of the Scribes and Pharisees. For these, our Saviour tells us, did all their good works purely to be seen of men: They prayed, and fasted, and gave alms, but it was to gain them applause \* among the people; that they might be

\* Mat. xxiii. 5, 6, 7.

publickly taken notice of with the highest respect on all occasions, and by this affected sanctity make a property of their devout, but ignorant admirers. The project was to raise their credit and their fortunes; and therefore it was their business to *appear righteous outwardly unto men*, though *within they were full of hypocrisy and iniquity*. But the same woes, which upon this very account were with so much earnestness pronounced, even by the meek and merciful Saviour of the world, against them, are equally level'd against us, if we take not care to excel them in this material article, the sincerity of those principles, by which we do righteousness. \* *A good man out of the good treasure of the HEART brings forth good things*, says Christ; representing to us thereby the necessity of a sincere and righteous mind, to the production of good and righteous practices: For however otherwise the appearance may be plausible to the world, and the effect of it visible and useful, as the alms of a Pharisee may be a true relief to the poor; yet if the design, which is the act of the heart, be vicious and irregular, the whole action is sinful, and the disguise and varnish of it serves only to aggravate the guilt of the actor. But then,

(3.) IN respect of the *degree and measure* of our righteousness, it must have a much more generous compass than that of the Scribes and Pharisees; it must be an *impartial and universal* righteousness. Let us not think it enough, when we are exact in some things, and negligent in others; let us not sit down contented with the first and more easy attainments and imperfect efforts in religion, with having set out well, and made some little progress in it, or with a formal use of certain means and instruments of righteousness; but grasp at every

\* Matth. xii. 35.

virtue, and press forward to perfection in the extent of each particular. And here I might enlarge upon the idle and imperfect religion of several sorts of people, who never considering to what severe precepts they are obliged, and what a perfect example they are to imitate, and what mighty aids and assistances are offered them, and what great rewards are proposed to them; content themselves with low and common measures, such as mere nature would teach them, and such as no way answer the prophecies and descriptions of that age of righteousness, which the Messiah, the last and great Prophet, came to instruct. But I will content myself with a few instances.

*FIRST*, There are some who think it sufficient, that they are a *little more civilized than the profane and profligate world about them*. Thus we find the vain-glorious Pharisee valuing himself, and dressing up his own character, as he thought, to the best advantage, upon this, that he was better than the generality of men, that he was no extortioner, not unjust, nor lewd and debauched, as many others were; and yet he was far short of what he should have been, he was weighed in the balance, and found wanting: For the poor Publican, being a sincere and thorough penitent, went home accepted by God, when the other did not. I doubt we have a great number of Christians, who can make no better pretence to the favour of God, than this *Pharisee* here, yet entertain a vain conceit of their being religious *enough*, because they are more regular and decent in their character than notoriously bad men are. 'Tis a good rule, that we should never compare our selves with those that are *worse*, but with such as are *better* than our selves: The former comparison will fill us only with pride; but the latter will shew us our defects, and teach us to improve.

*SECOND-*

*SECONDLY*, There are some who satisfy themselves with the observance only of the *most obvious and literal sense of several precepts*. Whatever the case of the *Jews* was in respect of this, the Gospel of Christ has taught us a more *extensive* obedience. So that it is not enough now that we abstain from murder and adultery, from theft and false accusation, and the like plain and visible acts of violence and wickedness; but we must likewise lay aside all envy, and spite, and bitterness, and evil-speaking, every unclean and brutish imagination, and the very love and desire of evil. For if we indulge our selves in these, though we abstain from the grosser actions, we are far from the measure of the christian righteousness.

*THIRDLY*, There are others who *rely upon a present good sense and disposition of mind*, expressing it self in sorrow and contrition, together with resolutions of better obedience; but yet upon the whole matter, are no better than before, never bringing forth the fruit of godly sorrow, which is amendment. That they are sorry for what they have done, shews that they have done amiss; and if they go so far as to make good resolutions, 'tis still in order to do better; but if these resolutions come to nothing, 'tis certain that flashy repentance of theirs will be of no service to them.

*THERE* are, *fourthly*, another sort of men, who rest only in the common means and helps of righteousness, who read much, and hear frequently, and pray often, which are all profitable means, and recommended to our use; not only as the instruments of obtaining good things, but also as the methods of acknowledging and reverencing Almighty God, and paying to him that obedience and praise which he requires of us. But yet how many have miscarried even here? I do not say by the too frequent exercises of devotion, but the depending upon them, as if



If there was nothing more to be done. Whereas in truth, so far as they are really *acts* of worship and obedience to God, they are still but parts of righteousness, and not the whole: But taking them (as reading and hearing more especially are) as *methods* appointed by God *for our instruction in righteousness*, it is not the bare use of, and attendance upon these, without the due effects of such instructions for pursuing practically those directions for an holy life, which they supply us with, that can denominate us righteous. And even prayer it self, though it is indeed an act of worship, and so a part of our religion, is also a means appointed, as other means are, for our advance in righteousness; and so we are only to reckon men righteous in the use of it, as it has that influence and effect upon them: For when men pray much and often, and yet live dishonestly and viciously in the world, they are no more to be called righteous, than men are to be esteemed healthful, that use much physick, when they languish all the time under a visible infirmity.

BUT, in the *fifth* and last place, there are others who *pick and chuse out* some particular duties or virtues, wherein they will be very exact, and fancy God Almighty will excuse them as to all the rest. Thus taught the Scribes and Pharisees, \* *who sat in Moses seat*, and were the received interpreters of the law of God amongst the *Jews*; they laid a mighty stress upon the religion of some one precept, to the neglect of others; and only differed in their opinion *which* precept should be so recommended, as appears by that question of the *Jewish* doctor, † *Which is the great commandment in the law?* And our Saviour accordingly in his answer sums up *the whole law*, the love of God and of our

\* Matth. xxiii. 2.

† Ibid. ver. 36.

neighbour, to obviate the mistake, and shew that one part of the law as well as another demands our faithful obedience. We must take the whole law of God before us, and have respect unto all his commands. We ought to consider 'em as the commands of God, whose authority is equally impressed upon all as upon any one. For says St. James, \* *He that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill.* He therefore who abstains from the one, in conscience of the authority of the imposer, should for that reason abstain from the other also, otherwise he does not do it in obedience to God. Some virtues are easy to some mens temper and constitution; or they have been fix'd in them by education; or the eyes of men, and the rewards of the world, and the power of laws, are so many encouragements to the practice of them. And from hence it comes to pass, that men are many times severe and superstitious in some things, and yet very careless and negligent in others. They can govern one passion, but not another; they will not be revengeful, but must be allow'd to be intemperate; or they can bridle their appetites, but not their tongue; or they dare venture to cheat and bear false witness, though they will not kill: And so they perform only an imperfect and partial righteousness, the principle of obedience not being the spring and fountain of their religion. Others, as if they were still disciples of the Scribes and Pharisees, rather than of Christ, are very nice and punctual in little things of less concernment, and think by that to atone for solid and substantial virtues. We find it charged upon those whom our Saviour assures us we must excel in goodness, or be undone for ever, that they were exact in paying tythe, even of the smallest products, \* *mint, annise,*

\* James ii. 11.

† Matth. xxiii. 23.

~~And cummin,~~ while they shamefully forgot the *weightier matters of the law; judgment, mercy and faith;* but our Saviour well determines upon it, *These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.* The smaller matters of religion, the ceremonies, the outward circumstances, and every injunction of it, ought to be carefully observed; but surely the argument holds much stronger for the observance of such precepts as tend to inward and universal holiness. There is no composition to be expected, we must be good to the utmost of our power in every thing, or, like the corrupt defective Scribes and Pharisees, we shall never enter into the kingdom of God.



## C H A P. XI.

*Of causeless Anger, and of scornful and censorious Language.*

MATTH. V. 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26.

*Ye have heard, that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill: and whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the Judgment.*

*But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger*

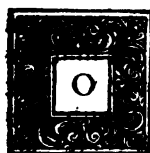
*danger of the council: But whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire.*

*Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there remembreſt that thy brother hath ought againſt thee;*

*Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, firſt be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.*

*Agree with thine adverſary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him: leſt at any time the adverſary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be caſt into priſon.*

*Verily I ſay unto thee, Thou ſhalt by no means come out thence, till thou haſt paid the uttermoſt farthing.*



OUR Lord having in the former paragraph declared, that ſuch as would be his Diſciples, muſt practiſe a more excellent and refined morality, than the *Jewiſh* doctors taught, and carry the precepts and prohibitions of the law of God beyond the then received interpretations of them, proceeds to give an inſtance in the matter of the ſixth commandment. The *Jews* underſtood by it, no more than what the letter of the precept forced them to acknowledge, a prohibition from *murder*, but he extends it to the forbidding of all ſuch ill-govern'd paſſions, and provoking behaviour, as were the *principles*, and might prove the *occasions* of murder. Let us ſuppoſe our Saviour to have expreſs'd himſelf after the following manner.

“ MURDER ye know to be forbidden by the  
 “ law under the pain of death, the judgment u-  
 “ sually inflicted for such a crime. But the com-  
 “ mission of murder, and the actual shedding of  
 “ blood, is far from being all that is restrained by  
 “ this commandment. For I, who am sent from  
 “ heaven as an authentick interpreter of the divine  
 “ laws, declare to you, that whosoever indulges  
 “ himself in *rash, unreasonable, or excessive anger*, is  
 “ in the eye of God guilty of a *capital crime*.  
 “ And whosoever proceeds farther, to *scornful and*  
 “ *contemptuous language*, is still a *more heinous of-*  
 “ *fender*, and worthy of a *more severe punishment*  
 “ than an ordinary death, even as a council uses to  
 “ be held amongst you for the punishment of *no-*  
 “ *torious* malefactors, when the common methods  
 “ of justice are thought too mild and gentle for  
 “ their crimes. And he who gives his tongue the  
 “ liberty of *reviling*, is still *more odious* to God, and  
 “ worthy of the most dreadful severities that can be  
 “ inflicted upon him. If therefore, when you come  
 “ to pay your devotions to Almighty God, ye remem-  
 “ ber, ye have been in any of these kinds injurious  
 “ to your neighbour, go first and reconcile your  
 “ selves to him, and then return and finish your  
 “ devotions; which then, and not till then, will  
 “ be acceptable. Make up the matter in time with  
 “ your adversary, whilst it may be made up, be-  
 “ fore the cause comes to be heard; lest being cast  
 “ ye be committed to prison, from whence ye  
 “ must not expect to be released without suffering  
 “ the utmost rigour of the law, whatever it be.

In explaining of this paragraph farther, I will not  
 trouble you with a critical account of the three de-  
 grees of punishment, referred to in *verse 22*. It  
 will be enough to observe, that by such an allusion  
 our Saviour signifies to us, that even *causeless an-*  
*ger* is a sin, *contemptuous language* a greater, and  
*cenforious*

*censorious reviling* yet worse; and that accordingly a punishment proportionable to the degrees of guilt, is reserved for each of these by the judgment of God, as well as for the grosser acts of murder. The precept therefore, as it is here refined upon and enlarged, extends,

- I. To the moderating of anger.
- II. To the restraining all scornful and contemptuous language, and all slanderous and vile reflections.
- III. To the obliging us, when we have done an injury, to repair it as well as we can, and to solicit a reconciliation as soon as is possible.

LET US consider these distinctly.

I. I begin with the first, the *rules to be observed for duly moderating our anger*. It was never the design of the christian religion to *root out* human passions; they being essential to our very nature, we are not men without them; but to reduce them to their true use, and confine them within due bounds. The motions of fear and love, of joy and grief, of complacency and anger, are not evil in *themselves*, but *as we use them*: Let them be governed by the law of God, and by the rules of reason, and they are as innocent as any other faculty of the rational soul, and every way as subservient and necessary to the ends of virtue. But if we let them loose, they will certainly drive us before them, as their slaves, to all manner of sin and extravagance; then the law of God will be trampled upon, reason will be over-born; the peace of our own minds, and the good order of all about us will be destroy'd. It is highly requisite, therefore, to keep a strait rein upon our passions, that we may govern *them*, and not they *us*; which, in the case I am now particularly speaking of, I suppose to be the meaning of St.

Paul's advice, \* *Be ye angry, and sin not*. He suggests indeed, that there is something of *difficulty* in being *angry* and *innocent* together; because the corruptions of our nature have given our passions that command over us, which nothing but the grace of God, and our own vigorous endeavours can restrain; yet certainly, he supposes it to be *possible*, or else the direction would be absurd. And that we *may* thus preserve our innocence, it concerns us carefully to look to it, that the *cause*, the *measure*, and the *continuance* of our anger be under due prescription.

(I.) FIRST then, we must not be angry *without a great and just provocation*. I take it for granted, that there are warrantable causes of anger, and that anger is not forbidden where the occasions are just. But since it is natural to us all, when we are moved to think, with peevish *Jonah*, that *we do well to be angry*; let us consider a little, what those occasions are, which really *will* or *will not*, justify our being so. One rule I am sure we may depend upon, that *whatever resentments proceed from PRIDE, or from exorbitant SELF-LOVE, are utterly unlawful*; for these are principles corrupt and vicious in themselves, and *who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?* And hence we must conclude against all resentments of *neglect, contradiction, personal contempt*, and other the like affronts, whether real or imaginary: Except where the authority of a parent, a master, or a magistrate is insulted; and then indeed for the sake of natural reverence and political order, contempts become just occasions of anger, and ought to be resented. But when the offence is merely personal (especially if the importance of it is not great) *humility and meekness* ought to govern, and all should be pass'd

\* Eph iv. 6.

by with a generous disregard, or softened by christian charity. I am sensible how hard it is for an angry man to persuade himself, that this, or that particular occasion (be it what it will) that moves him, has all its force and inflammation from *his own pride*, or excessive tenderness of himself. The *heart is deceitful above all things*, and will frame a thousand excuses to screen its own corruption; but what else is it owing to, that men take fire so presently, if a piece of respect to them happen (with or without design) to be omitted? If one whom they fancy to be an inferior (and whom will not a proud person think so?) step before them, or place himself above them; if a word or two be dropt in conversation, that seems to reflect upon them; if all they say be not entirely credited, or all their notions complied with, and all they do approved: How many contempts, tho' real perhaps, yet trifling, are resented, which ought much rather to be despised! And, which is worse, how angry will some men be when they are *told of their faults*, tho' in a mild and prudent way, and only from a kind intention of reclaiming them. Now what are all these and other resentments of this kind, but the issue of mens pride, and undue value of themselves? Every body will allow it so in another's case, how hardly soever he is brought to believe it in his own. And therefore *anger upon such grounds* must be irregular and unjustifiable. As to the matter of *real and considerable injuries*, I do not say 'tis altogether unlawful to be moved by them; but the less we are so, the better: For there is nothing more insisted on in the christian religion, than patience and meekness, even on these occasions. The only anger that is *without question* warrantable (beside what I took notice of above, in the case of a just authority insulted or contemned) is that which arises from a good man's *love of*



God, and *detestation of sin*. When he hears the holy name of God blasphemed or trifled with; his holy word prophaned; his being, his providence, or his truths denied; lewd language or indecent jests delivered; or uncharitable reflections vented against an innocent neighbour; when he sees the divine laws trampled upon, religion scandalized, debauchery and vice prevailing; then indeed *he does well to be angry*: His Lord and Master, upon whom he depends for his daily bread in this life, and his eternal happiness hereafter, is affronted; and who that has a sense of piety and gratitude can bear it? *Sin* we are not only allowed, but *required to hate*; and therefore, tho' we commiserate the *sinner*, we may and must be angry at *his sin*. Thus much for the *causes* of anger; let us now see how it is to be governed, with respect to the *measure or degree*.

(2.) OUR second rule therefore must be this, that our anger be not *greater than the offence deserves*. We must carefully confine it within such bounds, that it may not exceed the *merits of the cause*: For so far as it exceeds *them*, so far it is *without cause*; and therefore unreasonable and unchristian. I confess, there is no measuring out our resentments by grains and scruples, in an *exact* proportion to every accident that excites them: But there must be such a general regulation, as that it shall not be in the power of *trifling and small offences* to create in us a *great uneasiness*; nor of *any offence at all*, to blow us up into *storms and tempests*. Indeed, were we to judge of the importance of things by the weight they ordinarily make upon the spring of men's passions, it would be hard to fix upon any accident, how minute soever, that would be allowed to pass for a trifle. Nay, even those things that really are of moment, and will justify some greater roughness, do so easily hurry us into extremes, that there  
will

will need much grace, and much philosophy, and constant watchfulness, to temper, and restrain our heat. Even *zeal for God*, when it degenerates into fierceness and fury, becomes unwarrantable; and how great soever any personal provocation, or private injury may be, there are degrees of anger, that are absolutely, and at all times unlawful. Revenge is one of these (of which I shall have occasion to say more hereafter in another chapter) and the other is, what we properly enough, by way of emphasis, call *passion*; which beside the apparent danger it brings to such as fall in our way, or are about us during that extravagancy, is also disgraceful to human nature; carries us out of our selves, to do and say what shamefully betrays our weakness, and renders us *contemptible*, instead of making us *considerable*.

BUT farther,

(3.) ANOTHER rule whereby we ought to govern our anger is, *That we are not to retain it longer than reason requires.* And it is retained longer than reason requires, if it continue after the fault is acknowledged or amended, pardon asked, or due satisfaction given or offered. Or supposing the offence was trivial, if it continue any longer, than while we are under the first surprise; that is, if it continue after such time, wherein we might recollect our selves, and so compose and settle our minds; there is nothing more contrary to Christianity, than to be implacable and morose, even after just cause of anger; and so our Saviour suggests in his answer to St. Peter's question, \* *Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but, until seventy times seven, viz. So often forgive him, as he repents of what*

\* Mat. xyiii. 21, 22.

he hath done. And so we learn from those other words, † *If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee; saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him.* Where our Lord gives a special caution, that our anger do not remain with us a day, an hour, nay, a minute longer than there is just reason for it, as knowing how dangerous a passion it is; how apt to grow rankerous and inveterate; and how much advantage the great tempter hath against us. And this is that which St. Paul suggests, † *Be angry and sin not, let not the sun go down upon your wrath, neither give place to the devil.*

II. THE second article in which our Saviour has improved the sixth commandment, is the extending it to restrain all *foornful and contemptuous reviling, and censorious language.* These are indeed the effects of anger, which too generally shews it self this way; and therefore if anger, considered only as an inward resentment, or as expressed in certain over-acts, tho' short of these, must be restrained and moderated by the rules given under the former head; there is no room to doubt, but that such exorbitant efforts of it, as we are now to speak of, must be yet more heinous in themselves, more deeply offensive to God, and more carefully to be avoided by every Christian. The word *Raca* is used to signify an empty, witless, or contemptible fellow; and the word *fool* does usually represent to us in the Scripture language, a *dissolute or wicked man.* And so I take the meaning of this part of the paragraph to be, that words of reproach and contempt, add very much to the guilt of sinful anger. But *slandorous reviling*, as calling a man an *impious wretch*,

† Luke xvii. 3, 4.

† Eph. iv. 26.

and the like, is yet a more grievous offence, and will accordingly be punished. Harsh words of *any kind* are to be very sparingly used, not without a great deal of caution and discretion; where just authority corrects, and where it may serve the ends of virtue. But such harsh words as *these* must never come from us, but under the strictest regulations of temper, intention and truth. My meaning is, they are never to be the *effects of passion*, never uttered maliciously to *depreciate* and *expose* Men; and never apply'd without the most sensible and certain evidence. It is not the *using* of such words in *any account whatsoever* that is here forbidden, but when the use of them proceeds from *causeless* or *immoderate anger*, and from principles of spleen and malice. St. James makes use of the expression, \* *O vain man*, which is no other than the *English* of *Raca*; and our Saviour himself speaking to the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, † *Ye fools and blind*; and frequently calls them *hypocrites*. From which we may certainly draw this conclusion, that when those whose office and authority it is to reprove or to instruct, think fit to express themselves in such words, and do it out of a truly charitable intention, and in a calm and serious manner; by representing thus to the consciences of those they speak to, the folly and wickedness of a sinful course; and shewing them their own just character, where sharpness may be likely to do good; 'tis no offence at all against this precept. But when it is done merely to expose and ridicule, to vex and exasperate, to vent our anger, or to gratify our pride, it is a most unchristian practice. But let us a little more particularly consider,

(I.) The sin of *scoffing* and *derision*, those *arrows*, as the Psalmist calls them, *even bitter words*,

\* James ii. 20.

† Mat. xxiii. 17, 19.

oth'd over with an air of mirth, and feather'd  
 an affectation of wit; but pointed with ill  
 ire, and drawn to the head with all the strength  
 insolence and malice. And how many are there  
 value themselves for being excellent marks-men  
 his way? While they little think of those *judg-*  
*ts* that are *prepared for scorers*, when the ma-  
 us laugh shall be quite over with them, and  
 dreadful hour shall come, which will make  
 n serious, whether they will or no. Their be-  
 iour is doubtless *very displeasing to God*, who  
 res the good agreement, peace and comfort of  
 is rational creatures; and has set the meanest  
 them above contempt, by that inestimable price  
 l for their redemption, the death and sufferings  
 his Son. And it is *very provoking to those that*  
*abused by it*, no sting piercing deeper, or caus-  
 greater smart and inflammation in the minds  
 nen, than scornful language and ridicule. As  
 business of this is to lessen them in the  
 em of their neighbours, and to render them  
 icable where they live; and as the event does  
 ally answer the vile design of it, it becomes a  
*injury* to the persons so reproached, and conse-  
 ntly is a great *injustice* to them. And as the  
 igs for which men are usually derided, are either  
 defects of their understanding, the deformity  
 their bodies, or the poverty of their fortunes;  
 also barbarous and inhuman, nay, absurd and  
 icious. 'Tis reproaching them for what they can-  
 help, 'tis loading them with *scorn* for what  
 erves pity; 'tis either supposing them to *have*  
*le themselves*, (for else their natural defects in  
 nd or body, could not be imputed to them as a  
 coach;) or blasphemously *reflecting upon God*  
 o did *create them*, and finding fault with the  
 ckmanship and order of divine providence;  
 ich for reasons far above our censure, has thought  
 fit

fit to make a difference in mens understandings, shape and other circumstances. The design of this, so far as *we* can dive into it, is to exercise our compassion one towards another, and to present continual objects for our good nature to support, and charity to relieve. But this is impiously perverted, if instead of comforting, pitying and assisting, we triumph in their sorrows, sport with their defects, and play upon their misfortunes. God resents this as striking at himself, for he has declared, That *\* who so mocketh the poor, reproacheth his Maker; and he that is glad at calamities, shall not be unpunished.* And how great the punishment is that threatens them, we may learn from the prophetic curses uttered against them by the Psalmist, inspired by God, and recorded in Scripture for our terror. † *Pour out thine indignation upon them, and let thy wrathful anger take hold of them. Let their habitation be desolate, and let none dwell in their tents.* And for what cause? *For they persecute him whom thou hast smitten, and they talk to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded.* And therefore, says he, *Add iniquity to their iniquity: and let them not come into thy righteousness. Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous.* I must add here, that not only *derisive words*, but all such *actions* and *behaviour* as are of the same tendency, must by parity of reason be reduced under the same prohibition. For *actions* have a language as effectual as any words, and sometimes more expressive. All scornful looks therefore, and all gestures of contempt and mocking, all wilful affronts in our carriage, all designed and evident neglects, and whatever may seem to trample upon our neighbour, and is visibly intended to *lessen* and *ridicule* him, cannot but be equally hurtful to the sufferer, and equally odious both to God and Man.

\* Prov. xvii. 5.

† Psalm lxi. 24. &amp;c.

(2.) *CENSORIOUS railing*, or *reviling* is, in the eye of God, a sin of yet greater consequence, and more offensive. Our Saviour gives us here one instance to represent and include all others of the like kind: *Whosoever shall say, Thou fool.* Which taken in the ordinary sense, may stand for any *bitter* and *reviling term of passion*; and as the Scripture language does usually by *fool* intend a wicked and abandoned sinner, the expression here seems especially to point out those rash, uncharitable, and furious *censures*, which men of angry spirits and ill-governed zeal are apt to cast upon such as oppose them in religion, or any thing else; or on those whom they have taken an hatred to, from some personal and private pique. When men are thoroughly heated against an adversary, they are apt to fancy to themselves a license (which neither the laws of God nor natural right will authorize) of saying all the *bitter things they can against him*, without any restraint from charity or good manners, and often with as little regard to truth. Every failing of his shall serve to expose him as an hypocrite; his virtues shall be all misconstrued, and ascribed to ostentation and self-interest; or his vices shall be so improved, as if he were the vilest sinner upon earth. Now 'tis all one whether a man be thus ill treated *to his face*, or *behind his back*: The former indeed is more provoking, the latter more ungenerous; but both are included in this severe denunciation of our Saviour, against *whosoever shall say to his brother, Thou fool.* 'Tis spoken of as a greater crime than mocking and derision; because it is much worse to be wicked, than to be either deformed, poor, unfortunate, or of weak understanding; and consequently must strike deeper into mens reputations to be so represented, than only to be rendered contemptible. *Reviling*, as it is the effect of rage and overheated spirits, is also a very near approach to murder;

murder; the same degree of spleen and passion that enflames men to the one, having frequently ended in the other: And therefore our Saviour forming his prohibitions here to guard the sixth commandment, had reason to lay the greatest stress upon such sins as would be likeliest to endanger it. Beside, that it is utterly inconsistent with the meekness, patience, and charity of the christian religion, which strictly forbids it, even under the highest provocation. \* *Be pitiful, be courteous, says St. Peter, not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise, blessing.* And thus the primitive followers of our Lord behaved themselves. † *Being reviled, says St. Paul, we bless: being persecuted, we suffer it: being defamed, we entreat.* And thus their holy Master had taught them by his example: ‡ *Who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.* Now if a Christian suffering under such ill usage is forbid (though natural resentment strongly prompts him, and his adversary deserves it justly) to retaliate, I need not prove he should not give the *first provocation*. Let me observe only, that this practice of reviling is so hateful to the God of peace and charity, so contrary to the temper of heaven, that || *Michael the Archangel contending even with the devil, durst not bring against him a railing accusation; but said, The Lord rebuke thee.* And as by the divine authority of our religion, ∴ a railer is infamous, and every Christian is discharged from keeping company with him upon earth; so by a declarative sentence passed already, † he stands excluded by name from the society of the blessed in heaven. For what happiness or peace could we imagine there, and how should the suffer-

\* 1 Pet. iii. 9.

† 1 Cor. iv. 12.

‡ 1 Pet. ii. 23.

|| Jude 9.

∴ 1 Cor. v. 11.

† 1 Cor. vi. 10.



ings of good men be at an end, and charity be made perfect in that state, if such reviling spirits were admitted, as must needs disturb them.

LET us now consider, in as few words as may be,

III. THE third and last improvement of the sixth commandment, the obliging us to *give due and speedy satisfaction, as soon as is possible*. For tho' even the *injured and offended person* is bound by the precepts of Christianity, to endeavour on his part also a *reconciliation*; by accepting of reasonable terms when they are offered him, and by a readiness to forgive; yet I take the *aggressor*, or him that *gives* the offence, or *does* the injury, to be the person chiefly (if not only) concerned in this paragraph, as in other parts of the sermon we shall find the duty of the sufferer more distinctly spoken of. So that supposing us here to be concerned only with the *aggressor*, the method he must take to reconcile himself to the party injured or offended, must be according to the nature of the wrong or damage he has done him. Either,

(1.) BY *restitution*, when by fraud or violence he has injured him in his estate, or wrong'd him in a way of trade and bargaining. This is a principal part of justice. Hence we find in the *Jewish* law many rules and directions for the more exact and regular performance of it. And though there are no precise measures set down in the New Testament for the *regulation* of this duty, yet that it is still in general, a *duty*, is evident from natural light, the Gospel of Christ *presupposing* (and not always particularly repeating) such obligations as common honesty and reason every day suggest to us. And thus when *Zaccheus*, to whom our Saviour shew'd such respect as to dine at his house, would recommend himself to him and others as a real penitent, he

he immediately bethought himſelf of *reſtitution*, and ſaid, \* *Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by falſe accuſation, I reſtore him four-fold.* And this is the more neceſſary, becauſe where ſuch falſe dealing or open injuſtice has been done, reſtitution is the *firſt ſtep* which muſt be made in order to reconciliation: We can't expect an injured man ſhould be appeaſed without it; nor is it poſſible to make him due ſatisfaction, ſo long as he continues under the real effects of the injury, and we detain that from him, which he only ought to enjoy or to diſpoſe of. In other caſes (particularly the offences of the tongue, cenſorious reviling or detraction, and the like) we are to make him what amends we can.

(2.) *By reparation to his eſteem and credit in the world*; endeavouring to do him juſtice in as publick a manner as we have injured him; retracting our unworthy cenſure and ſuſpicions of him; acknowledging the fault of that reviling language we have given him, and doing all that lies in our power to reverſe the *undeſerved* character we have expoſed him in; or if deſerved, to ſoften it according to the rules of charity; thus labouring, as far as is poſſible, (in effect at leaſt) to unſay what we have ſaid, and undo the miſchief we may have done him, that he may not ſuffer by our unchriſtian paſſion and indiſcretion. 'Tis ſeldom we *can effectually* make him amends, and ſet him right this way; which therefore ſhould make us keep the ſtricter guard upon our tongue, that we be not guilty of offences and miſchiefs that are ſo hard to be rectified; becauſe the ill-nature of mankind is apter to take in and nourish the ill impreſſions of our ſpleen, and the bad character we give, than any after-vindications or apologies we can make to ſoften or re-

\* Luke xix. 8.

tract them: but it is, however, the only way that we can set our selves to reparation in this matter, and therefore we are bound in conscience to it, and let it avail as far as it can to that purpose. Again,

(3.) WHERE the injury is of a lower rate, or when an *affront* is only in the case, reconciliation may be effected by *begging of pardon*. This is the least we can offer to an offended brother; and therefore we should never be backward in it, when it will be accepted. Perhaps we may think it a little disgraceful to us; but if it be a disgrace, the *sin* of an *ill tongue* is but very gently punished by the *shame of acknowledging it*. And as pride was the main principle of that contempt, or other rudenesses in our language, from which the offence arose; even natural equity suggests, that no satisfaction can be answerable, which does not apparently disclaim and mortify that pride, the insolence of which is to be made amends for by a contrary act of humility and submission. But after all, I shall beg leave to think it *no disgrace*, but an argument of an ingenuous temper, to ask pardon: and that whatever the vain maxims of the world may teach, he is certainly the most a *gentleman*, as well as most a *Christian*, who reflects upon it as a greater shame to have been guilty of such ill-manners, than to retract it; and therefore is always ready with a generous submission to revoke what he has said or done unworthily.

Now which soever of these three sorts of satisfaction shall become reasonable, according to the nature of the offence, and necessary towards a reconciliation, our Saviour presses it here upon us, to lose no time, to make no delays, but immediately to set about it; and that for two very good reasons: The first is, That our devotions to God will be all unacceptable, and odious in his sight, till  
this

this be done. This is sufficiently hinted in those words: *If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there remembreſt that thy brother hath ought againſt thee: Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, firſt be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.* It is in vain to hope that God will accept us, ſo long as, having given our neighbour juſt occaſion of reſentment, our Minds continue the abuſe by an averſeneſs to give him due ſatisfaction, or ſo long as we ſhall needleſſy delay to offer it. And therefore upon the firſt remembrance of what we have ſaid or done to grieve him, even tho' we ſhould be then going to the private or publick ſervices of religion, we are oblig'd, if an opportunity can be had at that time, to go to him ~~and~~ make up the quarrel preſently, by performing or promiſing ſuch ſatisfaction as the laws of Chriſtianity require; or if for want of opportunity it be impracticable, then we muſt prepare our ſelves for it, by a readineſs and ſincere reſolution at leaſt to do it as ſoon as poſſibly we can: And the one or the other of theſe is ſo indiſpenſable a duty, that our prayers will be but a mocking of God without it. The ſecond reaſon urged by our Saviour, is drawn from prudence, as the firſt was from religion. *Agree with thine adverſary quickly, whiſt thou art in the way with him; leſt at any time thy adverſary deliver thee to thee judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be caſt into priſon. Verily I ſay unto thee, thou ſhalt by no means come out thence till thou haſt paid the uttermoſt farthing.* The laws of every nation protect the perſons, goods, and reputation of every ſingle ſubject that belongs to them, and will revenge the injured. If therefore I have been ſo wicked as to have done a wrong to my neighbour, my wiſeſt courſe is by a timely ſubmiſſion and repentance to reſtore him to this right, and prevent a ſuit at law, which will force

me to it otherwise at a great expence and trouble. And thus the present duty inculcated in this paragraph of our Saviour's sermon, is an instance amongst many others which might be produced, that true religion and true wisdom are inseparable; the precepts of Christianity being also principles of prudence, and providing as well for our peace and interest in this world, as for our eternal happiness in the next. But the argument which ought to weigh most with us, in engaging our practice of this or any other christian duty, is the authority of our lawgiver *Christ Jesus*.



## C H A P. XII.

*Of CHASTITY, and of needless SEPARATION after Marriage.*

MATTH. V. 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32.

*Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery.*

*But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.*

*And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee, that one of thy members should perish,*  
and

*and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.*

*And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.*

*It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement.*

*But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery; and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced, committeth adultery.*



FROM improving of the sixth, our Lord here goes on to the seventh commandment, which he fortifies by some new and necessary outworks; not only denies us entrance into this city of Sodom, but guards us off from any near approach to it; extending purity to a more excellent latitude, reducing marriage to the strictness of its original institution, and putting a stop to the beginnings of adultery in this, as he had taken away the occasions of murder in the former; that a Christian may have all his appetites in due subjection, that he may be angry and sin not, that he may marry and not offend. This we may suppose to be the true meaning and design of this paragraph, as much as if our Saviour had express'd himself in the following manner.

“ THE Law forbids adultery, and ye do not deny it does so; but beware lest ye deceive your  
 Q 3 “ selves

“ selves with too short and narrow definitions of  
“ the crime; vainly imagining, that where there  
“ is not the outward act of lewdness, there is no  
“ adultery. For I must tell you, that whosoever  
“ allows his eyes the liberty of gazing upon a wo-  
“ man, with an intention of kindling in himself or  
“ her, lascivious and unchaste desires; and whatso-  
“ ever woman adorns her self out of a design of  
“ raising an unlawful passion in the breast of a be-  
“ holder; he or she, tho’ they only indulge them-  
“ selves in lustful wishes and imaginations, without  
“ proceeding to any unlawful act, are adulterers in  
“ the esteem of God, and will be punished as such.  
“ And tho’ perhaps, considering the corruption of  
“ human nature, a restraint of this kind may seem  
“ as grievous as the plucking out a right eye, or  
“ the cutting off a right hand; yet it must be  
“ done, if ye will avoid the torments of hell fire,  
“ which wait upon the breach of this command-  
“ ment. The want or loss of any enjoyment here,  
“ though never so delightful, or (as ye may think  
“ it) hard to be parted with, is surely rather to be  
“ chosen than eternal ruin. And as to the matter  
“ of divorce, which is another liberty contrary to  
“ the tenor of the same commandment; it was in-  
“ deed for some peculiar reasons permitted to your  
“ fathers to put away their wives, when they had  
“ taken a dislike to them; provided they did it  
“ with the formalities of law, a bill of divorce-  
“ ment put into their hands. But this was not so  
“ from the beginning, nor lawful in it self; only  
“ a licence granted to that stiff-necked generation,  
“ for fear of a worse consequence, and for prevent-  
“ ing of a greater evil. This permission I do now  
“ by divine authority revoke, and I will that ye,  
“ my Disciples, keep strictly up to the primitive in-  
“ stitution of matrimony; which was such a con-  
“ junction, as made man and wife one flesh, not  
“ again

“ again to be disjoined, but by violence; and  
 “ therefore whosoever puts away his wife, unless  
 “ she first of all break the union by joining her  
 “ self with another, causeth both her and him that  
 “ marries her to commit adultery.

THIS paragraph therefore supplies us with two particulars worthy of our enquiry.

- I. THE extent of this commandment, and the height to which our Saviour carries the notion of christian chastity.
- II. WHAT he has directed with regard to divorce.

I. *THE extent of this commandment, and the height to which our Saviour carries the notion of christian chastity.* When God, the sole Author and Disposer of all things, thinks fit to publish his laws and decrees to the world, it is not for the devil to contend with the Almighty, and deny his authority; no, that would be too much; all that this wily enemy of mankind has to do, is by false glosses and pretexts to beguile the frail mind of man, and endeavour to interpret away the substance of the command. This we see was the case with the *Jews*; the devil durst not say that adultery was lawful, when God had given this commandment, *Thou shalt not commit adultery*; but taking advantage of the indulgence that was allowed that stubborn people, for the hardness of their hearts, to put away their wives by a bill of divorcement for some great and notorious crimes, he introduces it into practice for every frivolous pretence and idle dislike; and so far prevails over the minds of that people, that we find their very doctors and interpreters of the law gravely putting the question to our Saviour, whether it was not lawful for a man



to put away his wife upon *every* occasion. Our Saviour confutes this error, and at the same time explains the prohibition in its utmost latitude, extending it to all uncleanness of the mind as well as the body; forbidding the *inward lust* of fancy and desire: By which is not here meant all *natural desire in general*; for God has implanted no appetite in us that is originally sinful, or that becomes so any other way but by corruption and abuse. Nor is it the *first kindling* of an impure thought; for that an unavoidable accident *may* do, and when it does, we ought to mourn for the corruption of our hearts, and labour presently to suppress it. But what our Saviour here speaks of, is a lustful inclination blown up into a flame by our *encouragement* and *fond indulgence*. It is the act of the will that makes this sinful; when a loose heart sends out the eye to pimp for its debauched desires, and the roving lewd imagination pleases and entertains it self with the speculation of a vice, which it wishes for an opportunity of practising. And in this case fornication or adultery is really committed in the heart; for so far as the sinner dares to go, he goes; He has the enjoyment in a corrupted fancy, and the defilement sticks upon his conscience; his spirit, the best part of him, is debauched, and no thanks to any virtue in him, that his body is not so too. *Whofoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.* When we thus gaze and entertain a vicious fancy, what do we do else but court temptation? And where is it like to end, if circumstances happen to favour our desires, but in actual and compleat impurity? St. Peter's expression is remarkable to this purpose, where he describes some who walked after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, \* *Having eyes full of adultery,*

\* 2 Pet. ii. 14.

and that *CANNOT CEASE FROM SIN.*

Implying, that the indulgence they gave to a lustful eye, not only argued, but encreased the filthiness of their hearts; and chain'd them down to habits of lewdness by such a powerful fascination, that they could not cease from sin. The sad example of *David* ought to be remember'd also, who from the top of his palace gazed himself into wicked desires of *Bathsheba*, till he had made his appetite too strong both for his reason and his religion, and could not stop short of finishing the sin his fancy had begun: nor could he stop even there; for adultery with the wife drew him on to a deliberate murder of the husband; and the guilt of both these horrid crimes so stupified his conscience, that 'tis thought to be near a year before he was brought to repentance for them by the Prophet *Nathan*. Whosoever therefore would be chaste, must keep a strict guard upon *his Eyes*, and as \* *Job* did, must make a covenant with them. He must avoid with abhorrence all unclean thoughts, and all lascivious books and pictures. He must stop his ears to all smut, and indecent jests, and lewd conversation, and he must shun the company of such as are addicted to them. For as our Saviour's design in this paragraph is to fence in the seventh commandment, and in order to that directs us to guard the purity of our minds; and that this may be effectually done, he cautions us against such impressions from without as may defile them: this instance of looking upon a woman to lust after her, may very well include a prohibition of whatever is like to contribute to the same impurity. And now after the divine preacher had thus restrained this appetite, and directed us to such an exactness of purity in our very thoughts; one would not think, I say, that

\* *Job xxxi. 1.*

the tempter could possibly suggest any thing against this commandment, that could have any influence upon us : Yet some wretches there are so abandon'd of God, and wholly given up to sin and folly, that after all that our Saviour has said, should he return to the world again, we should hear them exceed their masters the Pharisees, and even dare to ask their Lord, whether *fornication* be not lawful; pleading that, by the interpretation of the original, it does not appear that fornication is any where forbid in the New Testament. They are willing to load adultery as heavy as you please, and paint it in the blackest colours, if you will but allow fornication to be comparatively little or nothing : And indeed it must be confess'd, that adultery is a sin of a deep dye, and has many and very heinous aggravations; yet 'twere easy to shew that the New Testament every where abounds with texts against fornication as well as adultery, and to shew that they both stand forbid by name with equal earnestness. But I shall confine my self to the argument in this paragraph of our Saviour's sermon, and desire to know how fornication is consistent with the chastity here prescribed; and the severe obligations to purity, which those are under who profess to serve a pure and holy God, and are baptized into a pure and holy religion. \* *For this is the will of God, even our sanctification, that we should abstain from fornication; that every one of us should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour, not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles, who know not God.* Must I refrain from every loose and idle thought, and may I commit actual lewdness? Must I not look on a woman to lust after her, and may I fulfil the lusts of the flesh with her? Must I cut off a right hand, or pluck out a right eye, ra-

\* 1 Theff. iv. 3, 4, 5.

ther than be ensnared by them, and may I become one bone and one flesh with an harlot? God forbid. If nature is uneasy under this restraint, there is a remedy provided; the Apostle tells us what it is, \* *To avoid fornication let every man have his own wife, and every woman her own husband. If they cannot contain, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn.* † *Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled; but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.* Thus much for our first enquiry: Let us proceed to the second.

II. *WHAT* our Saviour has directed with regard to divorce. Among the political laws which Moses gave to the Jews for the good-ordering of the commonwealth, there was a *permission* for any man upon dislike of his wife, to write her a bill of divorce, to put into her hands, and send her out of his house. But this was by no means given them, as a *moral precept*: It was only a *toleration* of a practice, which seems to have obtained amongst them before; and because of the *hardness of their hearts*, it was not thought fit to abridge them of it under the discipline of the *Mosaical Law*, lest that stubborn, impatient and ill-natur'd people, if not allow'd to put away the wives they hated, should abuse them, or should return to idolatry, where they saw divorce universally practised. But they were only obliged by *Moses*, to proceed in this divorce with due formalities of law, which might prevent the inconveniency of doing it rashly, and in a passion. Now this, which was a *bare permission*, the Jewish school maintain'd, as a practice *morally lawful*; and that it was no sin *in foro conscientiae* and before God, as well as not against their civil constitution. But our Saviour, in order

\* 1-Cor. vii. 2.

† Heb. xiii. 4.

to the restoring of the seventh commandment to its due and moral perfection, recalls this liberty here, and limits divorce to the case of adultery. This is, in short, what our Lord has done with regard to divorce: and having put an end to the evil by his recalling of the permission, there would be no need to enlarge farther upon this paragraph, had not the tempter here again interposed, and introduced an unjustifiable practice, prevalent amongst us at this day, of mens *forsaking* their wives, and women their husbands, to live *separately*, and this at the sole pleasure of one of them, or by private agreement of them both, without any *judicial process*, or so much as complaint before an ecclesiastical judge, whose sentence, even in the case of adultery, is required before a separation. And what is this but a direct putting away our wives, without so much as giving them a bill of divorce, and so indulging our selves in a licentiousness, even unknown to the *Jews*? All the difference that I see in it, is, that these disjoin'd members have a power of reuniting again, which the *Jews* had not; but if we consider, what use is generally made of this, we shall find, that the froward couple seldom meet again for the better, but for the worse; as if it was on purpose to repeat the same sinful act of *separation*. It is no excuse, that they remain single; I mean, that they do not offer to marry again so long as the forsaken party lives; for such a *needleless* and *illegal separation*, is certainly *of it self* a very great crime, though marrying again would make it greater; and tho' they have so much religion, honour, or regard to their interest, as to abstain from *polygamy*, they very much expose themselves to temptations of adultery; and indeed it is very hard for both parties, who are known to live thus separate, to keep their reputations clear with the world; for people will be apt to censure them, deservedly

servedly or not ; because separation does almost naturally produce suspicions of this kind, and experience has shewn many of them to be *too just*. Beside, suppose a married person, presuming upon his or her own strength, resolves never so much beforehand, by a prudent and reserv'd behaviour, to avoid all temptations, and to live a chaste life in a separate state ; yet considering the weakness of human nature, and the many temptations to which such a condition of life is obnoxious, this is an *unwarrantable presumption*. And moreover, such a person will be guilty of whatever liberty the forsaken party takes, who not being, perhaps, of the same temper and complexion, *cannot contain*, and yet is deprived of making use of the remedy the Apostle prescribes in this case. But whatever weight these arguments may have, there is another, I am sure, that ought to be well considered, and that is the strict union of affections, implied in the very *nature* of marriage, and promised under the solemn obligation of an *oath*, both by the one and the other, at their entrance upon that state : As to that strict union of affections, which I say is implied in the very nature of marriage, I know not how any Christian can desire it should be better prov'd or illustrated, than by considering, that our blessed Lord has made it the figure or representation of his love to his Church ; and unless we can suppose the love of Christ to be a faint, an heartless, and inconstant love, it must be very absurdly represented by any *slight* affection. Marriage, therefore, which is made an emblem of this love of Christ, could never give us any just and worthy idea of it in its own nature, if it did not imply such an exceeding great affection, so strict, so indissoluble, as might render it in some measure fit for the comparison. One would think, this should give Christians a stronger and a truer notion of the endearments,  
which

which ought to unite a married couple, than generally we find they have. But if these deductions from religion seem too speculative to a carnal mind, and want the influence upon practice, which might be expected from them; sure principles of *common honesty*, strengthened with the *obligation of an oath*, may be supposed a proper argument: I mean, that perpetual union and affection, which both parties mutually engage themselves to at the solemnization of their marriage. The promise is made in words, as express as can be, to adhere to each other from that day forward, in all states and conditions of life, *for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health*, and under all these suppositions, or whatever of this kind may happen, *still to love and to cherish*, so long as 'till death (which only shall dissolve the union) *part them*. This is surely a very *positive* and *solemn promise*, and made more solemn by their joining hands upon it in the presence of the Church, or of witnesses that represent the Church; and heighten'd also into a *formal oath*, by being promised in the more especial presence of God; as appears by the place, or at least by the religion of the whole ceremony, and by the first words that begin it, [*We are gathered together here in the sight of God*] and by the solemn protestation upon putting on the ring, [*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen,*] and by several other passages throughout the whole office, which must necessarily imply an appeal to God upon the truth and sincerity of the engagement; and this is the formal nature of an *oath*. Now upon this consideration is it not easy to see, that whatever couple thus joined together, *according to God's holy ordinance*, shall wilfully part from each other, and live in a state of separation, or which soever of the parties shall thus separate, though the other be unwilling, is guilty of  
a most

a most notorious *breach of faith and promise*, neither living together, nor loving as they engaged to do? and not only this, but of notorious *perjury* also, in acting directly contrary to what they had promised *before God*, and with an awful invocation of him? 'Tis to be fear'd, that many of those who enter into such an engagement, are guilty of *extream inadvertency and want of consideration*. They don't attend to the terms of the contract, nor ever duly reflect upon the extent of the obligation; but look upon the whole solemnity, as no more than a mere formality, without which they cannot by law attain the ends they propose. Their end is money-advancement, or something else far short of what it should be, and their right to these in such a match, being confirm'd to 'em by the ceremony of joining hands, &c. as the law directs, 'tis all they think of, when they come to be so join'd. But this surely is a great and dangerous prophanation of that ordinance; and the case is still much worse, if they really do consider the strictness of their contract, and yet intend within themselves never to be bound to perform it: For this is absolute treachery, a most ungenerous and villanous falsehood; 'tis dealing as the sons of *Jacob* did with the *Sichemites*, entering into a solemn covenant, and under the shelter of religion, too to serve the purposes only of an evil mind. On the other hand, I hope there are many, who enter into these engagements with sincere and hearty resolutions to act accordingly, though afterwards they make or find themselves uneasy under them, and have therefore a mind to part. But true affection is not variable by every little accident, nor totally to be destroy'd by a great one. If it be pretended, that the *humors* of the husband or wife are intolerable, or the *person-disagreeable*, these points should have been well consider'd *before marriage*; for all after-exceptions of this kind, are guarded



guarded and protested against in those words of the contract [*for better for worse*] which signify something to be sure, and what else can they signify? The hazard of other circumstances being provided for in the words next following, [*for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health*]. If *danger of life* be pleaded, or the *sufferance of violent injuries and abuses*, yet is there no such virtue as *patience*, no such duty as *submission* to the providence, and *trust* in the protection of God, required of us? And if they are, when must they be expected, when can they be exercised, but in a state of suffering? But if a remedy is to be sought for, all that can regularly be done, is first to see what the good offices of private friends can do, and if they fail, then to apply to the proper court, and submit the case to the determination of those whom the law has appointed judges therein. And still separation, whether legal or illegal, is so bad a remedy, that like desperate medicines, it should not be so much as thought of, till all other means have proved utterly incapable of effect, and that they cannot possibly live any longer together: For to any good and discreet person, such separation must be so comfortless a state, attended with such danger of ruin, both temporal and eternal, that all the hardships which it is applied to cure, could scarcely make the sufferer more uneasy or unhappy. But the unconcernedness of many loose, unthinking people under it, as full of mirth, and air, and jollity, as if no such misfortune had happen'd to them, makes it too evident, that it is sometimes a state of *choice*, more than of *necessity*. And if this practice goes on, perhaps in half an age more, it will be thought needless so much as to pretend, or talk of such a formal thing as a reason for parting; and marriage will become of course, no more than a temporary concubinage, that may be broke off at pleasure, with

with as much freedom, as we change our servants. The laws indeed have hitherto secured the continuance of the marriage, by maintaining (in spite of any such separation) the validity of jointures, settlements, and other civil rights of it; but the affection, cohabitation, &c. which I beg leave to call the sacred rights of marriage (as being the performance of what was solemnly vowed before God and the congregation, when it was contracted) are even now by some people, broke through with as little scruple, as if the contract had been really made but for a time. And tho' I will not charge our laws with favouring this, any otherwise than by too general and dangerous a connivance; yet I must say there is a custom which directly encourages separation, and therefore wants a full and positive law to restrain it: I mean the scandalous provision usually made before-hand, by settlements or marriage-articles for the wives separate maintenance, in case her husband and she should not think fit to live together. All such provisions, call them by what name you will, whether pin-money, or any thing else, which serve, and are designed to serve this purpose, with whatever plausible pretence they may be varnished over, I take to be of most pernicious consequence; as providing for a case, that ought not to be supposed amongst Christians, and putting a couple in mind of parting from each other, even then, when they are going solemnly to contract, for a strict union, affection, and cohabitation during life; and laying professedly a scheme for their doing that with convenience, which ought not to be done at all, and which with almost the same breath they vow before God and the congregation, that they will never do. Now what is all this, but a monstrous absurdity in the very nature of the thing, a most notorious shuffling in the accounts of common honesty, and a most impu-

dent prevarication with God himself? What is it but to empower and teach the wife to disregard her husband, and to loosen that dependance, which by the divine \* law she should always have upon him; for such a maintenance is secured to her, that she may carry well or ill to him, without danger to her interest, and leave him when she pleases. And as to the real influence of mischief such provisions may have had, I am satisfied, that many separations would never have been thought of, if this security given before-hand, had not encouraged and prepared the way for them. But perhaps pin-money, and the like provisions before-hand for dissection with convenience, being not morally evil; nor falling directly within the letter of this prohibition of divorce, may be thought not to deserve so much notice, in a short summary of christian practice, as I have taken of them; but because our Saviour certainly designed here, to condemn every thing that any ways promoted a disunion after marriage: I should not have been faithful to my subject, if I had been less severe upon a custom, which so much encourages a wife upon the least dislike to leave her husband; and the rather, because the practice grows every day more and more fashionable.

\* Gen. iii. 16.



C H A P.



## C H A P. XIII.

*Of taking God's Name in vain.*

MATTH. V. 33, 34, 35, 36, 37.

*Again, ye have heard, That it hath been said  
by them of old time, Thou shalt not for-  
swear thy self, but shalt perform unto the  
Lord thine oaths.*

*But I say unto you, Swear not at all; nei-  
ther by heaven, for it is God's throne:*

*Nor by the earth, for it is his footstool: nei-  
ther by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the  
great King.*

*Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because  
thou canst not make one hair white or  
black.*

*But let your communication be yea, yea; nay,  
nay; for whatsoever is more than these,  
cometh of evil.*



THE third commandment, *Thou shalt  
not take the name of the Lord thy God  
in vain*, was understood by the Jewish  
doctors, as no more than a prohibition  
of perjury. And therefore as they taught  
the people took it, and looked no farther for the

sense of the precept, than this short paraphrase: *Thou shalt not forswear thy self, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths*; which probably was their allowed and common gloss, established by authority in their schools, and cited as such by our blessed Saviour; who ('tis observable) does not here repeat the very words of the commandment, as he had done those of the sixth and seventh before, but their *interpretation* only: 'Because the words of the commandment, as God had delivered them, are so general, that *perjury* is no more expressed in them than *prophane swearing*; and as both are alike included and intended, the one is as easily reducible as the other, to the very terms of the law. But it was *their gloss*, that had injuriously restrain'd those general words; and therefore our Saviour cites *that*, in order to correct and supply the defects of it. Nor shall I need, in discoursing hereupon, to insist upon the crime of *swearing falsely*; which was then, and always has been (not only by the force of this divine precept, but by the light of nature) acknowledged to be a grievous sin; as *murder* and *adultery* also were, and for that reason I forbore to enlarge upon *them* in the foregoing paragraphs. For our Saviour left every precept of the decalogue, in the same full force and latitude, wherein it had ever been received or interpreted by the *Jews*: But where their interpretation had too much narrowed a command, and straitned the meaning of it, he enlarged it to its due perfection and extent. His new explications therefore and improvements, are what I am properly to consider: And what those are with regard to this third commandment, will be the clearer, if we suppose him only thus to have expressed himself.

" YE all acknowledge your selves obliged in con-  
 " science, by authority of the third command-  
 " ment, to *swear nothing falsely*, but to be *very*  
 " *sure*

“*sure of the truth, and very punctual in the performance of whatever ye have sworn. If due care be taken of this, ye conclude the law is strictly enough observed, and fully satisfied. But, I who come to declare to you the divine will and law more perfectly than ye have yet been able to discern, or willing to apprehend it, require of you much more than this; that ye not only swear not falsely, but not at all; that in your common conversation, ye, upon no account, and in no manner or form of speech, invoke the sacred name of God, tho’ the matter concerning which ye have occasion to speak be never so true. Nor yet think, that the sin of swearing may be evaded by indirect oaths: For swearing by God’s creatures is in effect swearing by him who created them, and for whose glory they are, and were created. For instance, swearing by heaven, is swearing by him whose throne and palace it is; and as the splendor of his Majesty shines chiefly there, so do’s the glory of his providence in this lower world; the whole earth is but one mighty kingdom, under the inspection and government of God; and therefore he that swears by the earth, swears by that sovereign power that form’d, supports, and governs it. What has Jerusalem in it that is venerable, but the ark and temple, the signals of God’s special presence? ’Tis this peculiar relation to God, as the capital city of his residence in the Church, that stamps a sacred character upon it; and therefore whosoever swears by Jerusalem, swears by that great God, who has chosen to place his name and worship there. And the case is still the same, when ye swear by creatures, which have not that peculiar sanctity and relation to God, as when ye swear by your own heads: For the object of an oath must be some powerful being;*

“ now ye your selves cannot change the colour of  
 “ one hair upon your heads, and therefore the oath  
 “ must be understood to be by him that can, and  
 “ that is no other than God. If then ye have  
 “ occasion in your familiar converse to affirm, or  
 “ promise, or deny any thing; let a simple affirma-  
 “ tion, assurance, or negation, suffice: 'tis enough  
 “ to say it is, or it is not; shall be, or shall not be  
 “ so; for whatsoever is more than these, is sinful.

The general terms in which our Saviour has couched this prohibition, *swear not at all*, &c. have occasioned some to imagine, that he prohibits, and condemns therein, as unlawful, all manner of oaths, without distinction; not only such as are rash, needless and prophane; but such also as are administered for the peace and good of human societies, the security of governments, and the judicial discovery of truth. But that this is an inconsiderate and erroneous extending of the precept beyond the real design, is evident, because an oath religiously, and solemnly taken \* *in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness*, as the Prophet expresses it upon weighty occasions, or for the public good, is an † *act of divine worship*, and the name of God is ‡ *reverenced*, not prophaned thereby. The author to the || *Hebrews* also acknowledges, that *an oath for confirmation is an end of all strife*; and therefore surely controversies may be determined by it, and cannot be determined any other way more properly, or more effectually. The Apostles and primitive Christians, never scrupled to take an oath on such occasions as deserved it. Nay, our Saviour himself, who to be sure would not do any thing unlawful, answered upon oath, when it was required of him in the high-priests court of judicature. All which being considered, I shall need

\* Jer. iv. 2.

† Deut. vi. 13.

‡ Deut. x. 20.

|| Heb. vi. 16.

∴ Mat. xxvi. 63, 64.

to enlarge no farther against the opinion of such interpreters; but proceed to shew, what use of God's name; or what sort of swearing it is which is indeed forbidden (over and above the case of perjury) in this third commandment. And here is forbidden,

I. *All swearing in common conversation*; whether directly, by God, or by his creatures; or indirectly, in any terms whatsoever, which imply an oath, and were only introduced to qualify the harshness of it. That the prohibition here is intended as a restraint upon our ordinary conversation, appears from these words, *Let your COMMUNICATION be yea, yea; and nay, nay*. And that this restraint is not laid without good reason, will be plain, if we consider the *nature of an oath*; which is an appeal for our sincerity and truth to some superior being, that thoroughly knows our consciences, and will certainly punish falsehood. Now, this superior being, however the expression may disguise it, can be no other than God: And though such oaths may be taken, when required by authority; and then the importance of the affair makes them acts of justice and duty, as in form and substance they are acts of religion; yet surely they are too solemn things to be prostituted to every trifling and slight occasion, and much more to a prophane and detestable custom of filling up a discourse with them upon no occasion at all. Let the matter we speak of be never so true, let our intention in promising be never so honest and ingenuous, it is not fit that with such an insolent and saucy freedom, we should summon the great God, whenever we please, to be a witness of it. For as no private man can of his own authority slay a malefactor, without sinning against the *sixth* commandment, and being guilty of murder; so neither can he, but by the



command or direction of the magistrate, appeal to God as witness of his truth, without offending against this *third* commandment, and taking the name of God in vain. Our Saviour therefore charges us to content our selves with barely *affirming* or *denying* in our conversation; or however with *repeating* such affirmation or denial, by way of assurance, that we really speak as we mean. *For whatsoever is more than this*, saith he, *cometh of evil*; that is, (1.) From the *evil one*, the devil, that great promoter of wickedness: the tongue that is exercised in oaths and curses, being set on fire of hell; and customary swearing being so void of temptation either from *pleasure* or from *profit* (and I may add from *honour* too; for no man generally meets with less respect, or is hearken'd to with less regard than a common swearer) that it would be difficult to account for the practice of so fruitless a vice, if it did not proceed from the instigation of a malicious spirit, who tempts men chiefly to those sins that are most affronting to God. Or, (2.) This expression [*cometh of evil*] may signify that the very use of an oath, and all occasions for it, proceeds from the *evil practices* of *falsehood* and *treachery*, so very common amongst men: Or rather, (3.) That common swearing proceeds from something *evil* and *sinful within our selves*; an evil want of reverence to God, and of a due sense of religion, or consideration of what we say; an evil affectation of conforming to the wicked customs of our company; or from a secret distrust of our own credit, as when men are conscious they have ly'd themselves out of any reasonable expectation to be believed, without giving the strongest security for their truth by swearing to it: For certainly continual appeals of this kind must look as if the swearer knew his character and veracity to be suspicious. But in which way soever of all these, the words be taken,  
it

it is apparently true, that swearing in ordinary conversation *cometh of evil*; and that methinks should be reason enough against it. Let us only now take a short view of the several kinds of swearing here prohibited. As,

1. *SWEARING directly by God, by Christ, or by the Holy Ghost*, under any of their names or titles, as, *Jehovah, the Lord, the Almighty, our Maker, Saviour*, and the like. For the ground of the commandment being the reverence that is due to the name of God, every person in the sacred Trinity is equally intituled to that reverence, as God; and every way of expressing or describing him is the name of God; whereby we make him known, and therefore is to be revered. To this head may be reduced the swearing by any thing which immediately relates to the great work of our redemption, as by the *life, death, blood, or wounds of Christ*, or by the *sacrament*; wherein these awful mysteries are solemnly represented, and Christ himself is spiritually present.

2. *SWEARING by any creature*. Now to swear by a creature, is to swear by any *angel*, by any *saint*, by *heaven*, by *earth*, or the like: And this, by our Saviour's express doctrine, is swearing by God himself, in effect; for all these were created by him, depend entirely upon him, and are nothing at all without him. They have no power of their own to do justice upon such as swear falsely by them; whatever any of them can do is but as instruments in the hands of God, and therefore God must be supposed to be meant, when they are sworn by: or else in swearing by them, we set up *them* for Gods, by attributing a divine power to them, which is rank idolatry. And so it is when men swear by any of those names the heathens gave to what they worshipped. For, as I said before, the very nature of an oath implies, that such an appeal is made

made to some superior and almighty Being, which thoroughly knows our consciences, and can and will reward our falsehood. But,

3. ALL such expressions also are forbid, as do covertly, and with some disguise, abbreviation, or the like, imply an oath, however qualified and soften'd, as, *God knows, faith, egad*, and others, which the wit, shall I say, or the folly of mankind, has contrived to evade a scandalous and barefaced prophaneness? All these, and every usage of this kind, are but as so many trifling methods to deceive our selves: Oaths they still are, and will without doubt be charged upon us accordingly at the day of judgment, being forbid, not only in this paragraph of our Saviour's sermon, but in other places of the holy Scripture, as in that of St. James's Epistle, \* *Above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by ANY OTHER OATH: but let your yea, be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.* And thus much for the sin of swearing. Beside which we are forbid,

II. ALL using of the name of God, or Christ, or Jesus, Lord or Saviour, in our ordinary discourse, without a due and suitable reverence, and a just occasion. For as such a reverence to the name of God is the very reason and foundation of our Saviour's precept against swearing here, the same reason equally affecting such a loose and careless mention of it, as I am now describing; this also must be supposed to be equally forbidden thereby. 'Tis undoubtedly taking the name of God in vain, and therefore falls within the very letter of the prohibition in the third commandment. If it be used in cursing, there is not only prophaneness, but a despe-

\* Jam. v. 12.

*rate malice* too, to encrease the guilt; and it is justly accounted horrible to all religious minds. But suppose it be not uttered in a curse, the prophane-ness still is visible, whether it be by way of exclamation, admiration, or expletive; as, *good God! O my God! O Jesu! O Lord!* and many the like expressions too frequently used; as if those venerable names were fit only to fill up a period, and to give an air of boldness and impudence to our conversation. Nor is the case at all mended, when those names are used in a way of rash and unconsidered prayer; as, *God bless us, God be merciful, God save you, Lord have mercy upon us, &c.* which very often occur in some mens common discourse; when there is no due seriousness attends it, and probably no thought at all of what is then desired by such a prayer. And sometimes it comes in so *unseasonably* and *improperly*, having no coherence at all with the rest of the discourse, that it is downright *nonsense*, as well as *impiety*. Let those (if there be any such) that use this, and yet have that regard to religion which they pretend, consider, that their being *good words*, and *good wishes* depends more upon their sincerity and devotion in uttering them, than upon the *mechanism* of syllables and a sentence; and that all the goodness that can be in the expression it self, will never atone for the trifling manner of using it: but it will still be *taking of God's name in vain*, while we treat it with so little solemnity, and throw up our addresses to him at such an impertinent and thoughtless rate. I will but just name a third thing naturally included in the prohibition, *viz.*

III. ALL *heedless, unattentive, and irreverent* taking even of *lawful oaths* imposed by authority. These oaths, and of these especially such as are by way of *qualification for an office, or obligation to discharge*

*discharge it well*, are for the most part look'd upon as mere formalities in law, and so the religion of them is lost; and those that take them are gazing about the while, or thinking of other matters, with no more devotion and concern, than if they were hearing some idle story, or repeating an ordinary discourse. And the case is not much better, in this regard, with oaths of *evidence*; those that take them are apt to consider them no farther than as solemn promises to speak the truth, not doing it with that awful solemnity that becomes an *appeal to the great God*, in what they say. But such a behaviour is plainly *taking the name of God in vain*, because they mention him, and appeal to him, without any consideration to whom they are speaking, and perform what is in the very nature of it a solemn act of worship and religion, without that serious sense of God, that ought to fill their minds, and without that reverence to his name, which is the foundation of the third commandment.





## C H A P. XIV.

*Of FORGIVING of INJURIES.*

MATTH. V. 38, 39, 40, 41, 42.

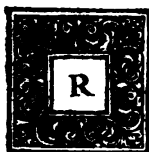
*Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.*

*But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.*

*And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also.*

*And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.*

*Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away.*



**R**ETALIATION of evil being one of the permissions indulged the Jews, in their politick laws, because of the hardness of their hearts, lest if they were not allowed this liberty, under stated rules, and by the sentence of the magistrate, they should in revenging themselves exceed all bounds and

and measures; our Saviour takes occasion from hence to lay down, in this paragraph, the duty of the *injured party, or sufferer*, (as he had before under consideration of the sixth commandment that of the *aggressor*) forbidding here all manner of private revenge, or returning evil for evil; as tho' he had said,

“ THE judicial law, it's true, allows of a requi-  
 “ tal of like for like, that he who deprives his  
 “ brother of a member, forfeit one of his own;  
 “ as an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.  
 “ But I charge you all, whosoever will be my  
 “ disciples, that ye presume not to give your  
 “ selves the ill-natured satisfaction of rendring evil  
 “ for evil, either in a publick or a private way:  
 “ but that rather than revenge *one* injury, ye  
 “ suffer *two*. If any man strike you, strike him  
 “ not again by way of resentment or retaliation.  
 “ And rather than take the advantage, which even  
 “ *the laws do* give you, for prosecuting upon  
 “ wrongs of small concern, or impositions of no  
 “ great consequence, shew your adversary how lit-  
 “ tle his malice or his violence moves you, by be-  
 “ ing forwarder to bear, than he is to inflict, and  
 “ ready to do more to gratify him, than he requires.  
 “ If by contentious suits he extort from you what  
 “ is really your own, and what ye can really bear  
 “ the loss of; let him take that, or more, rather  
 “ than contest it farther with him: And if he will  
 “ force you against your own convenience to go  
 “ with him *one mile*, go with him *another*, rather  
 “ than passionately dispute your liberty in so small  
 “ a matter. Say not this tenderness is like to en-  
 “ courage him to farther and greater injuries; that  
 “ is more than ye are sure of: Meekness and com-  
 “ placency are the best means to soften an enemy;  
 “ but though he *should* be so disingenuous, that  
 “ ye have reason to fear the contrary, trust that to  
 “ the

“ the providence of God, who is able to preserve you,  
 “ and will (without any interposition of yours)  
 “ sufficiently avenge you. Nay, let the injury be  
 “ what it will, be it ever so great and unsupport-  
 “ able, never apply your selves to magistrates and  
 “ laws, to *gratify a revengeful humour*; never pro-  
 “ secute *merely for the sake of punishing*; but either  
 “ for the publick good (separate from all ends of  
 “ private passion) or to obtain a *necessary repara-*  
 “ *tion for the damages ye have really received.* Nor  
 “ is this all, that ye abstain from returning evil  
 “ for evil; ye must even *relieve the necessities* of  
 “ such an injurious person. If by his circumstan-  
 “ ces he be brought to beg of you, give him free-  
 “ ly and cheerfully; if he desire to borrow, refuse  
 “ not to lend him; laying aside all grudges at the  
 “ evil he has done you: for my religion obliges  
 “ you to be charitable both to friends and ene-  
 “ mies.

I suppose in explaining of this paragraph farther  
 there will be no need to prove here the *lawfulness*  
*of wars*, wherein the publick honour and interest  
 is concerned: Nor that the prohibition does not  
 extend to *magistrates* punishing ill men according  
 to the laws of their country: for they are deputed  
 by the authority of God, to whom vengeance be-  
 longs, \* *to execute wrath upon him that does evil*,  
 and they are *not to bear the sword in vain*. But  
 that which seems in general to be the view of this  
 whole paragraph, is to restrain all personal resent-  
 ments and revenges, and to inculcate that we should  
 not do an hard, a mischievous, or a vexatious thing  
 to any one, because he hath done the like to us,  
 where many times our own good is not so much  
 considered as the others hurt; for the word ἀνίστη-  
 ναι signifies rather to oppose evil to evil, than to

\* Rom. xiii. 4.



ward off an injury. But there being four distinct precepts or directions included here, we will consider them severally.

I. THE first is, what a Christian must do who is injured *in his person*, by *blows*, or *words of contempt*, expressed by *striking on the one cheek*. Now the laws of every country taking cognizance of all injuries betwixt man and man, that carry a real damage along with them, and having provided such a satisfaction proportionable, as shall restrain the offender's insolence, vindicate the person wrong'd, and make up the damage he has suffered; we are first to consider whether the grievance we have to complain of, be such as the cool and unprejudiced justice of those laws have thought great enough to deserve a legal remedy. If it be such, our Saviour does not here forbid us to apply to the magistrate in defence and maintenance of our right; for he himself, when he was injuriously stricken by the high priest's servant, \* protested in open court against such usage. But if it be so small an injury, that the laws have taken no notice of it, our holy Master requires that we should rather *put it up*, than offer to revenge it. And though the words are not to be taken in so strict and literal a sense, as if we were bound industriously to give an insolent offender opportunities for a second injury, and to solicit new abuses from him: yet thus far we must extend the precept, that no real or pretended *fear* or *probability* of his taking advantage, from our patience under *one* abuse, to add *another*, should in any wise prompt us to revenge and retaliation. We must refer our selves to God, and bear with every thing that happens, rather than break through so plain, direct, and positive a command as we have:

\* John xviii. 22, 23.

here, not to *return evil for evil*. This will doubtless be thought an *hard saying*, by those who thro' a long indulged and humoured tenderness for themselves, have wrought the constitution of their minds to such a temper they can bear nothing. But who can help it? Religion, as it proceeds from God, must be an *authoritative rule*: our passions therefore are entirely to be govern'd by it, and not that rule bent to a compliance with our passions. 'Tis impossible to avoid reflecting here upon that most unchristian, barbarous, and senseless practice of *duelling*, whereby two lives, or more, are staked by way of satisfaction for affronts; which not only a disciple of Christ is bound to forgive, but even a prudent heathen would think it below him to regard. The great pretence is *honour*, but the notion of honour wretchedly mistaken and abused. True honour has by all wise men been thought to consist in such a *greatness of mind*, as carries a man above the resentment of contempts and injuries. And certainly it requires a greater share of courage to *pass* by an affront, than to revenge it, because the difficulty is greater. Now the proper object of courage is difficulty, as the proper spring and principle it issues from is honour: and therefore the conquest of a man's passion being harder, beyond comparison, than the indulgence of them, courage is most shewn in such a conquest, and that must be the truest honour, that inspires with such a courage; nor can any thing be more opposite to both, than is that peevish weakness, that is ruffled and discomposed at every affront, and enslaves men continually to their own pride and other mens ill-nature. But beside this grand mistake of the duellist, in his notion of honour and courage, the practice of such men is as defective in *common justice* and *equity*: for what proportion is there betwixt the trifling injury that provokes them (too insignificant, it seems, for

human laws to take the cognizance of) and the *life of a man*, in the destruction, or at least in the hazard of which they place their satisfaction. Lastly, they consider not to *how little purpose* this wild scheme of satisfaction really serves. Their end must be either *revenge, reparation of the damage received, or defence of their reputation*. If the *first*, 'tis the revenge of a mad-man, that will fire his enemy's house the very next to him, which in all probability will communicate the flames to his own, and burn that too, or at least apparently endanger it. If *reparation of the damage* be aim'd at, or *defence of reputation*; suppose he kill his enemy, what does he get by it? or how does that retrieve his credit? Will that wash off the aspersion, take off the blow, or prove the lie to have been falsely given? Not at all. His suffering by the affront or injury, is still just as great as the offender's insolence left it. What I have hitherto said, are arguments from *reason* only, against such a practice: And I might add, it were enough to restrain a good and wise man from it, that thereby he acts contrary to the *laws of the land*, in defiance of the government under which he lives, and is protected from whatever can reasonably be look'd upon as an injury that deserves to have any notice taken of it. But were this not so, and that no arguments could be drawn from reason or human laws against duelling; if it was really dishonourable not to fight; if declining it would, as is sometimes objected, expose a man to farther abuses; if duels were not fought upon the account of such trifling injuries, as generally they are; if engaging in them would repair a loss, or wipe off a disgrace, or be indeed a suitable revenge to a revengeful temper; yet surely there is something that with a Christian should outbalance all, that duelling is directly contrary to his holy profession, which requires patience under disgrace  
and

and reproaches. And no person deserves the character of a disciple of the suffering and forgiving *Jesus*, who acts contrary to the whole tenor of his religion, and sacrilegiously usurps the right of God, who has reserved the power of vengeance to himself, having said, *Vengeance is mine, I will repay.*

II. THE second precept, or direction, concerning our behaviour under wrongs, is when we are injured in *our properties*, when our goods or estates are taken from us either privately, or under colour of law, expressed here by the *taking away of the coat*. In this case there is a greater liberty of insisting upon redress and reparation, than in the former: the courts of justice are open, and the authority of the laws may be appeal'd to, and the injurious be forc'd to restitution. The precept here is not against all going to law: for courts to determine right of property and possession, as they are necessary, considering the violence and rapacious temper of some men, and contribute very much to the good order of the world, are doubtless agreeable in the nature, design, and use of them, to the God of order and justice. And being so, perhaps it may be thought there is no great danger in exceeding in the use we make of them; for since we owe a justice to our selves and our families, as well as to others; and since going to law is a lawful method of doing our selves right, how (may some say) can any man be to blame in taking all advantages the law will give him? But permit me the liberty of answering in the words of an Apostle, equally true of this as of what himself applies it to, \* *The law is good, if a man use it lawfully*. Christianity has directed certain bounds and rules of moderation, which ought to be carefully observed in this

\* 1 Tim. i. 8.

matter; or else our going to law may be as great a sin, as that man's injustice that gives occasion for it.

(1.) FIRST then; let the injury we have suffered, or the right we sue for, be such as *is really of great moment to us*, and that not in our own judgment only (for pride or covetousness may impose upon us when we make the estimate our selves) but in the judgment of some wise, good, and peaceable neighbour, to whom we should discover freely our design of going to law, before we take one actual step in it, together with the reasons which we think make it necessary and fit for us so to do; and be ruled by his opinion, whether it may be worth our while to proceed or not. For 'tis a shame to Christianity, and even to the common bonds of good nature and good neighbourhood, that every *trifling damage*, every *pitiful trespass*, or every *inconsiderable demand*, should presently create a suit at law. Let us remember that a Christian is obliged to be of a merciful and forgiving temper, to study his own peace, and the peace of those about him; which he can never be said to do, while he is acted by such a litigious spirit. I suppose the precept of our Saviour here to be levelled especially at this very thing, *the going to law upon trifling occasions*, where the injury or loss is such as we can well bear, and is of little consequence to our fortunes or our families. However this certainly is the least that can be meant by it; and therefore if his authority have not influence to over-rule us in so small a matter, 'tis in vain to pretend to call our selves the disciples of Christ.

(2.) WHEN we go to law, even upon the most allowable occasions, it must be *without any malice or desire of revenge in the heart*. How grievous soever the wrong that has been done us is, whatever we have suffered, or are like to suffer by it, be  
the

the justice of our demands, and the injustice of our adversary's refusal ever so great and apparent, let none of these things enflame us to a thirst of returning evil for evil, so as to make that in any measure the principle we go upon in the suit; remembering, that a Christian is not to use the law purely to punish or to hurt his adversary, but to do himself and his family justice.

(3.) WE must take care during the whole time the contest is depending, and as well before it is commenced as after it is determined, that *our behaviour towards him be with great meekness and civility*, by no means giving our selves a loose of railing at him, and speaking ill of him; affronting or insulting him the while, as many do; who weakly imagine that a law-suit is justification enough for all the ugly things they can say of an adversary, or the rudenesses they can shew to him. Nor is this all; we must be ready to believe the best of him, and willing, whenever he can be brought to it, to make up the difference by the arbitration of friends; or any other easy way, that may prevent the many temptations to evil, and the inconveniencies on both sides, which may be expected in continuing the suit; choosing rather by such an arbitration to recede a little from our right, than obstinately to dispute it inch by inch with him, to the disturbance of peace and charity. But if such an agreement be rejected on *his* side, and the law takes its course, then,

(4.) WHEN the matter is brought to an issue, and the trial is over, we must be able to *sit down cool and contented, whatever the determination be*. Submitting to the loss of our cause, if it be given against us, without vexatiously carrying the suit from court to court; in hopes at length to ruin an adversary with the expence, or weary him out with the trouble of attendance. I do not say, that

where there is evident injustice done, corruption of witnesses, or bribing of juries (not suspected only, but capable of sufficient proof) and this such as unquestionably turn'd the verdict *against*, which otherwise would have been *for us*. I do not say in these cases we are always bound to acquiesce (tho' if our loss or damage be tolerable, it may be our wisest way) but that we may lawfully try our right a second time, or (if it be of very great moment to us and we have strong presumption of justice on our side) a third time, &c. But we must not do any thing like this for contention-sake, and to be troublesome, from a proud resentment of being cast, an obstinate humour of revenge, or a greedy appetite of what we sue for.

THESE rules are all necessary to be observed by every Christian who endeavours to right himself by law, and perhaps the acquiring such a temper as is requisite, may be a more difficult task, and give a man more uneasiness than the injury; and he might with less trouble and less danger sit down with the first loss. These considerations, if duly weighed, would, it is to be hop'd, cure many Christians of that litigiousness, to which they are too much addicted, and which is certainly a very great crime in them. Christians cannot well err on the other hand, in suffering themselves to be ill treated; but they may be too severe in their exactions of justice, in always insisting on the letter of the law,

III. THE third precept or direction concerning our behaviour under wrongs, is with respect to the injuries received from *superiors*; when a man *abuses the advantage he has over us by strength or power*, to force us to do what he has *no right* to require of us; expressed here by *compelling us to go with him a mile*. In this case our Saviour commands us not to be furly and inflexible, tenacious of every little privilege

privilege or exemption, which the laws have given us from such demands; but (if there be no moral evil in the thing) to do what is required, or twice as much, for the sake of peace, rather than tumultuously and clamorously to contest it. If to this it be objected, what then do the protection of laws, the notion of liberty, or the favour of special privileges, signify, if we must give them up to the oppression of every insolent invader? I answer, in this, as under the former head of going to law, we are not forbid to maintain our selves in such legal advantages, as by the judgment of wise and good men, are of great consequence either to our selves or to the publick. Our Saviour never intended hereby to set aside the force of laws; but what I presume he would have us to do by this precept, is, that to impositions of little moment, which are personal only, affecting our own private liberty, and even these such tolerable injuries, that they are rather a mere breach of privilege than any real or considerable damage to us, we should patiently and calmly submit; the breach of charity and peace being like to end in much worse consequences than the breach of such a privilege.

IV. THE fourth precept obliges us not only to that passive disposition which has been described, excluding resentment and revenge, or requiring patience and submission under the injustice of an enemy; but that we should so perfectly set aside the consideration of the injuries he has done us, as to shew the same active generosity in *doing good to him*, as to those who never gave us provocation. We must do good to *all men*, whether friends or enemies, or indifferent persons; and this is here expressed by the two instances of giving and lending. If he that has injur'd us fall into poverty, and either need the relief of alms, or upon occasion,



when it may be serviceable to him, be so far humbled, as to desire to borrow money of us; we must give as freely to him what we can afford to give, and lend as freely to him what he would borrow, if we can spare it, as we would to any other indifferent person; not daring to refuse, upon any pique or resentment against him for what has formerly pass'd between us. That this is the true meaning of the precept, as it stands in this part of our Saviour's sermon, I have no manner of doubt, nor can I better illustrate it than by these verses from the Epistle to the *Romans*, which inculcate the very same thing. \* *Dearly beloved, avenge not your selves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.* As for the objection from the nature of *friendship*, and what distinction the Gospel allows us to make in favour of that, it will fall in to be considered in the next paragraph; as what concerns in general the duty of *alms-giving* will in that which follows it.

† Rom. xii. 19, 20, 21.





## CHAP. XV.

### *Of the loving of Enemies.*

MATTH. V. 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48.

*Ye have heard, that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.*

*But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.*

*That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just, and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same?*

*And if ye salute your brethren only, what do you more than others? Do not even the publicans so?*

*Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*

THE



THE foregoing paragraph, it may be thought, has drawn out the duty of *forgiving of injuries* to a mighty length: It obliges us to abstain from all retaliations of evil in private; it forbids all violent and angry prosecutions in courts of law, and justice; it charges us to run the hazard of suffering many injuries one after another, rather than fence our selves against them, by a spirit of revenge; nay, it enjoins us so far to forget the evil that has been done us, as to relieve the injurious person, if he should afterwards fall into distress. One would be apt to think, that whosoever can do all this, acquits himself sufficiently as a generous Christian: And yet there is something more and higher expected from us, which the present paragraph requires. 'Tis not enough, it seems, that we *forget what is past*, and be ready to do good to an adversary *hereafter*, as it may lie in our way: But even now, while the injury is a doing, while his malice has us actually in chase, while our good name lies bleeding fresh by his vile and venomous reflections, and we are suffering every day by all the mischiefs he can do to our other interests; nay, and if his power and cruelty extend so far, even while our bodies are tormented, or our lives expiring by them; we must *love* and *bless* him, *pray* for him, and *do him good*; and this is the true standard of a Christian's perfection in charity. Our Saviour takes occasion the rather to urge this, because of a popular and prevailing error amongst the *Jews*; who having read that their ancestors were commissioned by God, as ministers of his justice, utterly to destroy the seven nations, that possessed the land of \* *Canaan* before them; to blot out the remem-

\* Deut. vii. 12, &c. Deut. xxv. 19. Deut. xxiii. 3, 4.

brance of *Amalek* under heaven, and were discharged from seeking the peace and prosperity of the *Ammonites*, and the *Moabites*, considered not that these were special cases, fixed by the divine command, and grounded upon reasons both of state and religion; but drew an inference very falsely from them to their own private and personal quarrels, and advanced it into a maxim, that though in general, they were to *love their neighbours*, yet they not only *might*, but *ought to hate their enemies*, especially such as were enemies to their law and worship. This their doctors taught with much assurance, and the people received it with a malicious readiness, as being naturally violent and revengeful. But our Saviour here corrects their mistake; and requires his followers, on the contrary, to behave themselves with the greatest meekness and beneficence to all that injure them, to pray for their enemies conversion, and to do them good, even tho' they are despitefully abused, and persecuted by them at that instant, whether for religion, or for any private or personal cause.

“ YE know (says he) that by the law, ye are  
“ commanded to love your *neighbours*, a word,  
“ which in its due extent and latitude comprises *all*  
“ *mankind*, and all mankind in general is really in-  
“ tended in it. But your doctors have distinguished  
“ away the force of the precept, and narrowed  
“ the signification of the word, to a fellowship  
“ in the same religion, civil polity, or private  
“ friendships, and in *this* sense teaching you to  
“ *love your neighbours*, have falsely form'd an anti-  
“ thesis, that you may *hate your enemy*. On the  
“ contrary, I tell you, that even the worst enemy  
“ ye have is your neighbour, and whatever his re-  
“ ligion, his country, or his usage of you be, ye  
“ are bound to love him, even at the time that he  
“ is most injurious and abusive. Does he curse, or  
“ rail

“ rail at you, and speak evil of you? Do ye in re-  
 “ turn wish well to him, and say all that ye can  
 “ justly say in commendation of him. Does he  
 “ pursue you with implacable hatred, is he daily  
 “ doing you all the mischief in his power, or does  
 “ he persecute you for the testimony of a good  
 “ conscience, with all the fury and cruelty that hell  
 “ can inspire? Do all the personal good offices ye  
 “ can to him upon all occasions; contrive to bene-  
 “ fit him, as he does to injure you; pray earnestly  
 “ and every day to God for his good estate in this  
 “ world, and such a thorough conversion as may  
 “ bring him happily to the next. By this ye will ma-  
 “ nifest your selves to be the sons of God, whose pro-  
 “ vidence is equally exercised over all his creatures,  
 “ not differencing in this present state of things,  
 “ the righteous from the wicked, but making his  
 “ sun to shine on the evil and on the good, and  
 “ sending rain on the just and on the unjust. For  
 “ if your love reaches only to your friends, to  
 “ those who are, or may be beneficial to you, what  
 “ reward can ye expect for this? Nature and self-  
 “ interest prompt you to it, and even the *Publi-*  
 “ *cans* ye so much despise, can practise it. And if  
 “ ye be only respectful to those of your own fa-  
 “ mily or neighbourhood, common civility and  
 “ good manners oblige to this, and it is no more  
 “ than the worst of men attain. But I would have  
 “ you Christians, who are the sons of God by a-  
 “ doption, to imitate your heavenly Father in a  
 “ more extended charity and universal benevo-  
 “ lence.

OUR blessed Saviour here not only gives his Disci-  
 ples the true meaning of that precept, *Thou shalt*  
*love thy neighbour as thy self*, extending neighbour-  
 hood to all the world, and love to the most exalted  
 degrees of kindness; but what we may observe to  
 be usual with him, when the duty goes much  
 against

against the grain of human nature, and the common practice of mankind (as in this of loving our enemies, and in that of not laying up treasures upon earth) he condescends to give reasons for our obedience, from the usefulness and excellence of what is commanded. Let us therefore consider,

- I. THE duty it self of loving our enemies.
- II. THE motives and arguments by which our Lord has condescended, to urge and encourage us thereto.

I. THE duty it self of loving our enemies. The meaning of the word *love*, in this place, is best explain'd by our Saviour himself, in those three instances of friendship and affection,  *blessing, doing good, and praying for them*; as the contrary instances of  *cursing, hating, and despitefully using and persecuting*, explain what is here to be understood by an enemy.

(I.) *FIRST* then, We are obliged to bless them: The word used here is *εὐλογεῖτε*, which implies both the  *speaking them civilly to their faces, and speaking well of them behind their backs*. Tho' they reproach, revile and slander us, treat us, when present, with the most contemptuous and insulting, the most scurrilous and bitter language; and when we are absent, make it their business daily to lessen and defame us, and to say all the ill things of us, they can either hear, imagine, or invent: Our conduct is to be directly the reverse of this; we must answer them in the most civil and courteous, the most obliging and good-natured terms; and whenever we have occasion to speak of them in company, we must labour to conceal their faults, where charity and justice do not require us to discover them; we must put the best construction upon their actions, and the fairest gloss upon their characters,  
that

that they will reasonably bear; and we must on all occasions be ready to publish whatever in them is virtuous and commendable.

(2.) THE second instance, *doing good*, is of a mighty latitude. It extends as far, and shews it self in as many forms, as the necessities of our indigent life, and the troubles of our uncertain state, as far as all that our enemies can possibly suffer, all that they can stand in need of, all that we can do to help and to relieve them, and all the benefits they are capable of receiving, either with regard to soul, body, or estate. Though they are daily contriving new injuries, or repeating old ones, and doing us all the mischief in their power; yet we must act a contrary, and a better part towards *them*, by all such acts of charity, as suit best with their present circumstances and condition, relieving them in want, comforting them in affliction, assisting them in their difficulties; and if they will admit of it, advising them in their affairs, reproving them for their sins, admonishing them of their duty, in such a way as may be likeliest to have a good effect upon them. And in short, we must be ready always to do for them, whatever may be really of advantage, to the forwarding of their temporal or eternal happiness.

(3.) By the third instance, we are taught to *pray for them* also, even for those that bitterly malign and persecute us. What help we cannot give them our selves, we must sincerely and fervently pray God to give them; recommending them to his infinite power, and infinite compassion to restore their health, relieve their wants, and bless them with all needful blessings: As *David* did for his enemies, who when they were sick, \* *cloathed himself with sackcloth, and humbled his soul with fast-*

\* Psalm xxxv. 13.

*ing, and prayed for them, though his prayer returned into his own bosom.* But especially recommending them to the *grace* and *mercy* of God, that he would never revenge upon them the injuries they have done us. *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do;* as the greatest of sufferers prayed for those who were then abusing and murdering him with the greatest insolence and cruelty; setting us hereby an illustrious example of that perfect charity he requires. We should beseech God, by the power of his holy Spirit, so to awaken their consciences, and so to improve their convictions, that they may be brought to a true and effectual repentance for all their sins, that a thorough conversion to God and goodness may be wrought in them, and their souls may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. All this is imply'd in the word *love*, and is a christian duty from which no one, who pretends to be a disciple of our charitable Lord and Master, can hope to be excused: For no less than this brotherly affection for all mankind, be they never so injurious, will be accepted by him. But perhaps it may be objected, that if this extensive affection be due to my *enemies*, there will be no room for any distinction in favour of my *friends*. If I am bound to do all the good offices I can for *them*, what is there I can do more for *these*? I answer, that though by christian principles, *friendship*, as a duty, is extended to all mankind, even to those that hate and injure us, as well as to those that do us good, and our religion (now) calls it charity; yet *particular* and *special* friendship, the loving of one person more than another, which induces a *voluntary additional* obligation, and is one of the greatest comforts of society, is doubtless still as lawful, and as commendable as ever. I need go no farther for an instance that will thoroughly justify this, than our Lord himself; who though he was continually instructing,



instructing, warning, admonishing, healing, and doing good to an ungrateful and malicious people, and though he purposely came into the world to \* *die for his enemies*, which is the strongest effort of love that can be made even to our dearest friends, had nevertheless his twelve select Disciples, with whom he conversed more intimately, and taught with greater diligence and freedom, † and prayed for in a particular manner, with more than ordinary tenderness and concern. And even in *that* number, three of them were singled out for special confidences and favours. And even of these three, ‡ St. *John* is eminently distinguished, as the Disciple whom he loved, his bosom friend; no doubt therefore, our religion, notwithstanding the extensive charity it requires, has left us room enough for particular friendships. And if it be still ask'd, what these particular friendships can imply, and suppose, beyond what is included in that charity? I answer, that such a friendship consists in three things: The doing of *real benefits and good offices*, the distinctions of *special honour and esteem*, and the particular *freedom and intimacy of conversation*. Now real benefits are either such as are *necessary*, as relieving the wants of people, assisting them in distress, praying heartily for them, admonishing them for the good of their souls, doing justice to what is commendable in them, and shewing a tenderness to the rest of their character; those I confess are benefits promiscuously due to all mankind, whether friends, enemies, or indifferent persons, according to the knowledge we have of their necessities, and to our own ability of serving them: Yet even here, in *some of these*, where it may so happen that a *parti-*

\* Rom. v. 10. John xv. 13. Mark iv. 33, 34.

† John xvii. Matth. xvii. 1, 2. Mark v. 37. Mark xiv. 33.

‡ John xiii. 23. John xxi. 20.

cular friend may need and require our help at the same time an indifferent person or an enemy does, and *we cannot relieve, or do service to them all.* I question not but we may prefer the service of *our friend*; and that, because there is another moral duty, called *gratitude*, which in his case throws an additional weight into the scale. Or farther, benefits may be such as are not strictly necessary, but *voluntary*; and, if I may call them so, redundant: Now these I may reserve *for my friend*. For tho' I am bound to relieve an enemy, if I can, when he is in want, &c. I am not bound to make him extraordinary presents, to solicit extraordinary advantages and preferments for him, to leave him legacies, or make him my heir, and the like. Again, the *two last* constituent parts of friendship, which I mentioned, are peculiar to it; an enemy cannot claim them. As friendship ought to be founded on virtue, built up by good offices, and strengthened by a grateful sense of them, the *distinctions of special honour and esteem* are due to it, not merely because *we love*, but because the virtue and merit of our friend *deserve to be distinguished*, and his particular regard to us ought in justice to be returned. And lastly, the *freedom and intimacy of conversation*, is what the Scripture no where requires us to use, with either a known or a suspected enemy. This is entirely sacred to friendship: So says our Saviour to his Apostles, *\* I have called you friends; for all things which I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you.* And indeed, to disclose to an enemy our inmost thoughts and purposes, and the secrets of our affairs, would only enable him to do us the more effectual mischiefs; whereas religion was never design'd to overthrow

\* John xv. 15.

common prudence. I hope the objection is by this time sufficiently answered, and charity to our enemies shewn to be consistent enough, with a particular and distinguishing favour to our friends. And now, since the practice of such a love to those that hate and injure us, as is here required, may seem very difficult to human nature; let us see,

II. THE motives and arguments by which our Lord has condescended to urge and encourage us thereto.

(1.) THE first is, that hereby we *prove our selves to be the children of God*, who dispenses the necessary benefits of life with a promiscuous bounty, gives out the light and warmth of the sun to cherish the persons, and direct the affairs, not only of those that love and serve him, but of the unthankful and rebellious also, and sends his showers to enrich and bless the lands not only of the good, who employ the fruits of them to his glory, and the relief of others; but of the worst of men, who turn his grace into lasciviousness, pervert his benefits to luxury, and the riches he bestows upon them to oppression and injustice. Now if our heavenly Father is thus daily kind to those that are daily provoking, and perhaps blaspheming him, no argument can be stronger than this, to all who have a right notion, what an honour it is to be esteem'd the children of God, and who consider that imitation is the most natural evidence, that they stand so related to him. For children are apt to imitate their parents, in whatever they observe in them, especially what is most remarkable and conspicuous; and shall not *we* then endeavour to resemble our heavenly Father in one of his chiefest properties, that of doing good to the greatest offenders?

By

By such a love to our enemies, as his example has traced out to us, we should be best able to satisfy our selves, and to convince the world, that we are the children of him, whose infinite goodness we endeavour to express in our behaviour, though in degrees far short of it, and with much of childish imperfection: And as this attribute is that, which of all others renders the divine Being it self most amiable, a resemblance of it in us would be most to our praise and honour.

(2.) A second argument is from the *reward which Christians expect*. It is but reasonable, that since Christ assures us of eternal happiness upon our obedience, that we should be willing to obey his commands, how disagreeable soever they may be to our corrupt natures: For surely we who live under more glorious promises and hopes, should be ready to do more than those, who have no such expectation. If our love to those about us be only a return for favours received, or to oblige them to farther kindnesses, 'tis mean and mercenary, we have had our reward here, and what can we expect hereafter? In truth, a due observance of the other laws of Christianity, such as humility, and a low esteem of the treasures of this world, would make the love of our enemies, which seems so difficult a duty, more easy: For pride and covetousness are the great obstructions to the practice of this love, by raising in us false notions of honour and self-interest, and so making us to look upon the duty as too severe, when all the difficulty proceeds from those passions, which ought to be subdued and kept under.

(3.) ANOTHER argument is from the *practice of the Publicans*, who, in the esteem of the Jews, were

were the worst of men, yet even these knew how to be kind and courteous to their friends, their neighbours, or their kindred; and if our love extends no farther, it is a sign that it proceeds not from a *principle of religion*, but from the mere force of *natural civility*, or from the *mechanism of education*. For certainly, nature, good breeding, or interest, may have power enough over those, who make no pretensions to religion, to oblige them to return a courtesy or a complement, whoever it is that gives it, whether a friend or an enemy; to salute those that salute them, nay, and often, (as occasion makes it necessary) to treat with abundance of good words and outward candour, those whom they really hate, and who they know hate *them*. But nothing less than a sense of duty and obligations from *religion*, can ever carry a man so far as to *love an enemy* in good earnest, and not only to speak him fair, but to demonstrate his sincerity, by a constant readiness to do him service, an uniform generosity of carriage and behaviour towards him. By this therefore we must distinguish our selves as *Christians*, under the power of spiritual principles and heavenly grace; which will enable to perform what nature, worldly policy, or custom can never reach to.

OUR Saviour concludes all with this exhortation; *Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect*: And a very proper conclusion it is, both with respect to this particular sublime duty, of loving our enemies, and to the rest of the improvements of the Decalogue, which went before. It's true, no man *can be perfect, as God is perfect*. I mean as to the *degree*, because God is infinitely so, and therefore it may look as if Christ commanded an impossible thing; but that perfection which the Gospel requires is a *most earnest and diligent*

*diligent endeavour after goodness, especially charity: and this is certainly in our power. We must strive to resemble the infinite goodness, as far as we are able, and that because of the relation Christians bear to their heavenly Father, by regeneration and adoption; \* They are the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus; and therefore must put on his nature by a transformation of their own, into as near a similitude to his in every perfection as is possible, especially in that of love: For so says St. John, † Let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God.*

\* Gal. iii. 26.

† 1 John iv. 7.





## C H A P. XVI.

## Of ALMS-GIVING.

MATTH. VI. 1, 2, 3, 4.

*Take heed that ye do not your alms before men,  
to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no  
reward of your Father which is in heaven.  
Therefore, when thou dost thine alms, do not  
sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites  
do, in the synagogues, and in the streets,  
that they may have glory of men. Verily I  
say unto you, they have their reward.  
But when thou dost alms, let not thy left hand  
know what thy right hand doeth;  
That thine alms may be in secret; and thy Fa-  
ther which seeth in secret, himself shall re-  
ward thee openly.*



OUR Lord having in the foregoing paragraphs corrected certain errors in the Jewish explications of the Decalogue, and some other popular mistakes among them, the clearing of which was requisite to the instructing his Disciples rightly in his own religion, he proceeds now to give some cautions for the better performance of the three great duties,

duties, as they are esteem'd in most religions (and particularly were so in that of the *Jews*) *alms-giving*, *prayer*, and *fasting*. This paragraph is about *alms-giving*; and the caution is, that we should not do it out of ostentation, which, in other words, would be to this effect.

“ **WHATEVER** others do, I would have *you*, my  
“ Disciples, when ye bestow a gift on any poor  
“ man, to be very careful, that ye do it not out of  
“ a vain desire of being applauded for your charity:  
“ For if this be your design, ye have received  
“ your reward already in that applause, and must  
“ expect none hereafter in the kingdom of heaven:  
“ Therefore chuse not public places, as the hypocrites do,  
“ for distributions of your charity, as if  
“ ye were rather marketing for fame and reputation,  
“ than discharging a good conscience towards  
“ God, and kindness to the poor; or as if your  
“ virtue would be wholly lost, if the parade and  
“ pomp of it did not draw an admiring croud about you.  
“ On the contrary, be ye so afraid of  
“ deceiving your selves by a vanity of this nature,  
“ as to chuse the *most retired places*, where ye may  
“ bestow your alms with the greatest secrecy, except,  
“ when ye may reasonably hope to do good  
“ by your good example, and *that* be the true reason  
“ of your appearing. And God, who knows  
“ the secret thoughts of your hearts, and the principle  
“ and design of your actions, will certainly  
“ at the great day of account, reward you openly  
“ before angels and men; so that ye shall by no  
“ means lose the credit of your good works, by  
“ denying your selves the seeking of that praise  
“ from men, but shall receive the honour of it,  
“ with more lasting and substantial glory, from the  
“ unerring mouth of God.

Now *alms-giving*, tho' not expressly commanded in this paragraph, is yet by our Saviour's caution



for the right performance of it, supposed to be a christian duty. My business therefore must be to explain,

I. WHAT it is that Christians are obliged to do in general, with regard to alms-giving.

II. THE true meaning of this particular caution, of not doing it before men, to be seen of them.

I. *WHAT it is that Christians are obliged to do, with regard to alms-giving.* And this will best be done, by considering, (1.) To what persons we are to give. (2.) What, or how much. (3.) When, or at what time.

(1.) I begin with the first, where I am to shew, to *what persons* we ought to give. And these, no doubt, are properly those who are *in want*, and are *not able to help themselves*. If they can do this, tho' they be in want, 'twere better even for themselves, as well as for the public good, that they are left to their own industry, than suffered to prey upon the fruits of other mens labours, while they indulge themselves in sloth and idleness: for idleness is the greatest corrupter both of body and mind, an enemy to the health, a certain fixer of poverty, when men are once fall'n into it, as well as the usual cause and occasion of falling into poverty; the seed-plot of many misfortunes, the parent of many vices, and the spring of several public and mischievous crimes, the pest of a common-wealth, and what apparently tends to its decay and ruin. In consideration of which evils, the Apostle St. Paul wrote thus to the *Thessalonians*, \* *For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any man would not work, neither should he eat.* And

\* 2 Theff. iii. 10.

afterwards speaking to such as these, he says, † *Now them that are such, we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.* The proper objects of charity, therefore, are poor, helpless orphans and widows; such sick, and aged, and decayed persons, as are not able to help themselves; to assist these is a singular piece of charity, and this charity an eminent part of Christianity, a pure and undefiled religion. So St. James hath told us, ‡ *Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction,* viz. to comfort, support and relieve them in the affliction they labour under. But as those who are unable to help themselves are the proper objects of compassion, and to be relieved on that account; so are there certain other circumstances to be considered in this case, as requiring a more especial charity.

As first of all, if the person fell into want and poverty, not by his own neglect or vices, not by idleness or debauchery, but by calamities either in his body or estate, which it was not in his power to prevent: This case requires an especial favour. Here God in the way of his providence prepares an object for our charity, and therefore no doubt requires a freer exercise of it, than where a man makes himself so by that which God forbids, by idleness, luxury, and excess.

AND then again another circumstance, which commands a more especial charity, is, where the person is a Christian, and that not only in profession, but in practice too. And this is that which St. Paul considered, \* *As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.* There is a chari-

† 2 Thess. iii. 12.

‡ James. i. 27.

\* Gal. vi. 10.

ty due to all who stand in need of our assistance, but more especially due to them who make profession of Christianity, as being fellow-members with us, of the body of Christ, and heirs of the same glory that we our selves expect from him; and therefore spiritually related to us, and more particularly dear to Christ himself, and therefore worthy of more regard, where other circumstances are alike, than those that have not so much of the divine image upon them, and of his grace in them.

ADD hereunto a third circumstance, that ought to recommend a poor person to our especial consideration; namely, natural kindred and relation to us. For as the proper rule of charity, first requires a provision for a man's own family; inasmuch, that † *He is worse than an infidel, who provides not for them of his own house*: so the next care it requires, is of the *branches* of the same house. But here observe, that I speak of the matter of charity only; for as to publick places and offices in Church or state, no doubt, but a fit and able person is to be preferr'd before a relative; because publick offices are designed for publick advantage, and therefore the best qualified are to be chosen without regard to blood and affinity, unless a near relation be equally fit, or at least sufficiently and duly qualified; and this may suffice to shew the properest objects of our charity. Proceed we now to the

(2.) SECOND point, which is, *how much* we ought to give: And here the general rule is, that we give according to the wants of others, considered together with our own ability. Where I shall lay down these two rules. *First*, That we are not so to give, as to exhaust the very fountain. But yet, *secondly*, That we are obliged to give liberally, with regard to our estates and power.

† 1 Tim. v. 8.

**FIRST,** We are not ſo to give, as to exhauſt the very fountain, to diſable our ſelves from being in a capacity of giving more. For if to give, be to do a good action highly acceptable to God, and agreeable to our own minds, is it not abſurd and childiſh, by an over forward zeal, to run our ſelves out of breath for it, and out of mere eagernels of the duty, to deſtroy our own capacity of performing it? Beſides, were there any obligation upon us from God to break our eſtates into pieces, and to diſtribute them to the poor, how would it conſiſt with the other obligations, which he has certainly laid us under, of providing for our families, according to the degree we are planted in? Or ſuppoſe there were no families to be taken care of, what would be the iſſue of ſuch an extravagant bounty, but a vain and uſeleſs reciprocation? For when I had by this means made my ſelf poor, another muſt put himſelf into the like circumſtances to enrich me, and ſo on in an endleſs circle of change and confuſion to no manner of purpoſe. For though our Lord required a certain young man to ſell all he had, and to give to the poor, and to follow him (who no doubt would have provided for him, had he complied with that command) the precept there was only a trial, whether his forward client could find in his heart, or not, to quit all his worldly poſſeſſions for the ſake of religion, if times ſhould come that might make it neceſſary, as afterwards the times of perſecution did. So that it implies no more to us in general, than that whoſoever will be a Chriſtian in earneſt, muſt fit ſo looſe to all the enjoyments in this world, as to be ſincerely ready and willing to part with them; how great, how dear ſoever, when they cannot be kept without quitting his religion and a good conſcience. But no part of the Scripture, that I know of, obliges us by any ſtand-  
ing

ing law to part with all we have in charity to others, and thereby reduce our selves to want.

YET, *secondly*, There is no doubt, but that every man ought to give *liberally*, with respect to what estate he hath. This is suggested in the words, \* *Give alms of such things as ye have.* Tho' ye have neither silver nor gold to give, yet give of such things as ye have. From whence it appears, that there is a bounty demanded even from meaner persons, a liberality required in them, and much more from those of fortunes or estates. But that which does most effectually shew, that God requires us to give liberally, is, that the reward of charity shall rise in proportion to the generosity and greatness of it. So St. Paul tells us, † *He which soweth sparingly, shall reap sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully, shall reap bountifully.* To the same purpose is the exhortation that follows, *Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: For God loveth a chearful giver.* God requires that we give with free and chearful minds, and therefore hath not punctually determined the very sums, or the strict proportion to be given, but left that loose and unsettled, that there may be room to shew our liberality. But I have said enough of this head, to make way for the

(3.) LAST point, *when* we ought to give. The resolution is, that we are obliged then to give, when christian prudence shall determine, that it is most seasonable so to do. And though I will not say, that it is always, in all cases, and in all circumstances, to be our rule, to give *speedily*, and *without delay*; yet it is generally so, and that for two very good reasons.

\* Luke x. 41.

† 2 Cor. ix. 6.

*FIRST*, Because it is best to give, while we have opportunity and ability so to do, both which may fail us afterwards, although we have them at present. We may be surprized by sudden death, and so deprived of the opportunity of doing the good we had designed; and likewise of the reward thereof, if our delay in so doing proceed from any unwillingness to the duty, as probably enough it did. And then again, we know not how our estates may vary, what changes may possibly come upon us; and therefore 'tis prudent to do good; while it is in the power of our hand to do it.

*BUT, secondly*, Another reason that may press the quick and speedy relief of those who want, is, that the delay of so doing, continues them under their fears and griefs, their wants and miseries; and it must be a mighty cause, which can excuse the delay of relief in this case, and much more justify it. And therefore, the longer we needlessly delay to relieve them, after we are convinced; or may be so, if we please, of their necessity, the more we shall expose our selves, to be answerable for what they suffer in the mean time; and let it be remembred, that God who will be the Judge both of their necessities and our charity, knows the hearts of men, and all the several shifts and fallacies, whereby they are wont to deceive themselves in the delays of doing good.

II. I am now to explain the true meaning of this particular caution, of not doing our alms before men, to be seen of them. And this will best be done, by considering; (1.) How, or in what manner, we must give our alms. (2.) With what designs or ends.

(1.) I shall begin with the first; *how, or in what manner*, we must give our alms. Sometimes it must be done with all the *privacy* that is possible,

ble, and that both for their sakes to whom we give, and for our own likewise. *For their sakes*, in compliance with their modesty and reputation (especially, when they are such, whose quality and education has been above the common rank) lest we do a prejudice to their credit, while we do a charity to their persons, and spoil the comfort which our gift would afford them, by mingling a disgrace with it, and make our bounty a reproach, and upbraid the poverty we relieved: So also, we must give with as much secrecy as we can, *for our own sakes*, as well as theirs; lest we do, or seem to do as the *Pharisees* did, sound a trumpet before our alms, and give to serve our own glory, not the necessities of our neighbor; give to feed our own vanity, and not the hunger of those that want; for while men labour thus to magnify their liberality in the eyes of men, they lessen it in the eyes of God; not but that *sometimes* it must be done *publickly*, as when the example may have great influence upon others in drawing them in, to give more largely, to the greater benefit and advantage of the poor; as is the case of subscriptions to charitable uses, money given at the sacrament, collections for briefs, and the like. Beside, publick charities are, generally speaking, of greater use than private, as extending farther, and may be done without offence against our Saviour's caution. For it is not the doing them *openly*, but doing them with a vain-glorious *purpose* to be seen of men, that renders our alms defective in God's esteem. And therefore, those who excuse themselves from publick alms-giving, under a pretence that they should not do it openly, are guilty either of a great prevarication, or mighty weakness; either perverting or mistaking the true design of this paragraph of our Saviour's sermon, which brings me to the

(2.) SECOND point; with what *designs*, or for what *ends*, we must bestow our alms; and these are in short to honour God, to do good unto our neighbour, and to lay up treasure for our selves in heaven.

THE first thing to be propounded to our selves in this duty, is, the *glory* and *honour* of God, who takes that as given to himself, which we give to the poor, with regard to him, and in obedience to his laws. This is evident, by the whole tenour of our Saviour's discourse in the twenty fifth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel. *I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me, &c. Verily I say unto you, in as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.* He looks upon himself, as *\*honoured with our substance, and with the first-fruits of our increase*; when tho' we cannot now, as the Jews did of old, express that honour, in sacrificing the best of our herds, and flocks before his altar, as free-will offerings, in acknowledgment of his goodness to us, we *freely and generously relieve the poor*, out of our estates, and make the same acknowledgments to him, by honouring *them* as his receivers. For even, while those very rites were both accepted and required, this duty of honouring God by alms-giving was so much more acceptable, that it was preferred before them. Mercy was always esteem'd by God, as better than sacrifice. He needs not any thing from his creatures, the world is his, and the cattle upon a thousand hills, and therefore what he requires from us in honour of him, is to communicate of the plenty he has given us to those that want. † *To do*

\* Prov. iii. 9.

† Heb. xiii. 16.



*good and to communicate, forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.*

THE next design or end we ought to have in alms-giving, is, to *do good to the receiver*, a thing most necessary in this duty, to render it pleasing either to God or men; for even *men* are not pleased with what we give, unless it apparently proceed from kindness to them: be the gift it self never so beneficial to them, they cannot think themselves obliged to the giver, if therein he aimed at his own credit and reputation, or other private interests, and gave not out of any prevailing tenderness for *them*. And in *God's esteem*, who eyes and values the hearts of men in all their actions, and never accepts of any thing as good, which flows not from a good disposition; *mercy and compassion* are altogether necessary in all our alms-giving. *St. Paul*, when he says, \**Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing*; implies, that it is possible for a man to give all his goods away to charitable uses, and yet to have nothing in him of the *principle*, or *grace of charity*: For as he may perform the outward act of *humility* out of *pride* and *ambition*, to gain the applause of men; so doubtless, he may the outward acts of *beneficence* to the poor, out of a principle of *ostentation*, and *vain-glory*, so get the credit, without either the desire or care of doing good, though it may also have this effect, and be a real advantage to those to whom he gives. Now such a charity, as well as such an humility, springing only from pride and ostentation, is merely mechanical and material; but has nothing of the substance of true virtue in it. Self-love, and not compassion to others, is at the bottom of it; and therefore, whatsoever good it does, that good is

\* 1 Cor. xiii. 3.

accidental, and for want of an honest principle, the reward is lost. So says our Saviour, *Ye have your reward*; that is, ye have the praise of men indeed, (which is all ye aim at) but it is in vain for you to hope for any reward hereafter.

BUT yet, notwithstanding all the kindness and compassion that is required, to purify our intention in the charities we bestow, thus far it is lawful to mind our selves, and to consider our own advantage, as well as others, in this duty. *We may justly hope to be rewarded by God for it*, and very lawfully do the duty, with an eye, or respect to this reward. God hath promised to reward it, \**He that seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. Charge them who are rich in this world, says St. Paul, that they be ready to give, and glad to distribute, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may attain eternal life.* And certainly it is very lawful to act in hope of God's promises, and use the rewards therein promised, as a motive to discharge the duty, else were these promises not only useless, but even a snare and temptation to us.

FROM these points well considered, we may have sufficient knowledge of what our Saviour would have us to avoid, or do, design, or not design, in the performance of this first great duty of alms-giving.

\* 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18, 19.



## C H A P. XVII.

## Of PRAYER.

MATTH. VI. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15.

*And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.*

*But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.*

*But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.*

*Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.*

*After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name.*

*Thy*

*Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth,  
as it is in heaven.*

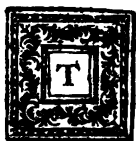
*Give us this day our daily bread.*

*And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our  
debtors.*

*And lead us not into temptation, but deliver  
us from evil: for thine is the kingdom,  
and the power, and the glory, for ever.  
Amen.*

*For, if ye forgive men their trespasses, your  
heavenly Father will also forgive you.*

*But if ye forgive not men their trespasses,  
neither will your Father forgive your tref-  
passes.*



THE second religious duty adopted here by Christ into his institution, and for the better performance of which he gives us some directions, is that of prayer, and what he says of it is in effect as follows.

“ As ostentation ought by no means to be your  
“ design in your *alms-giving*, so neither in your  
“ *prayers*. When therefore ye pretend to offer  
“ up to God your private devotions, do it in such  
“ a manner, that they may indeed be private. Let  
“ no vile affection of being observ’d and talk’d of  
“ for your piety, lead you to chuse such places for  
“ prayer, where ye may be seen or heard. For  
“ thus the hypocrites do, who love to pray in the  
“ streets, or any where else, as much in view as  
“ possible, that their religion may acquire them  
“ credit and repute amongst men: And this, as it  
“ is their chief design, is like to be all the reward  
“ of such devotion. Do ye on the contrary, when

“ ye address your selves to God in private prayer,  
 “ retire into your chambers, or your closets, shut  
 “ too your door, and contrive to be as secret as  
 “ ye can, and use not artifices of any kind, which  
 “ may by an affected chance discover to your fa-  
 “ mily, or others, what ye are about. This will  
 “ best answer both the nature and the ends of pri-  
 “ vate prayer; and God, who observes you in the  
 “ most secret retirements, and hears the softest  
 “ whispers of a genuine and sincere devotion, will  
 “ reward you for it openly hereafter. Be careful  
 “ also, when ye pray, to avoid a multiplicity of  
 “ useless words, and vain enlargements, and imper-  
 “ tinent flourishes. Let your requests be few,  
 “ your expressions grave, and short, and compre-  
 “ hensive. Be not too minute and particular, ei-  
 “ ther in what ye ask, or in your arguments for  
 “ obtaining it. The heathens indeed are full of  
 “ vain repetitions in this matter, verbose and trifling:  
 “ because they consider not that God is every  
 “ where, and at all times present; they address  
 “ themselves to him as if he were a finite being  
 “ like themselves, and wanted an exact information  
 “ of their case; or were apt to be sullen, and  
 “ needed abundance of arguments to move him;  
 “ or might be prevail’d with, as men sometimes  
 “ are, by pompous rhetoric, or by long and artful  
 “ orations. But this is a great mistake: Your  
 “ heavenly Father knows both before and better  
 “ than you your selves, what things ye have need  
 “ of; and is sufficiently inclined by his own dispo-  
 “ sition to hear, when ye offer up your requests  
 “ with a sincere and decent modesty. After this  
 “ manner therefore pray ye, *Our Father, &c.*

In explaining of this paragraph, I might and  
 should have said something of the *obligation* to  
 prayer, as a duty required of Christians, although  
 it be not here directly commanded, but only sup-  
 posed

posed and taken for granted in those words, *When thou prayest*. But because there is another whole paragraph on this subject, wherein perseverance and importunity in prayer being required, our obligation to prayer it self, as a duty, is more direct and visible; I shall confine my thoughts here,

I. To the consideration of the several *sorts* or *kinds* of prayer.

II. To enquire into the meaning of the two cautions given, (1.) Against ostentation; and, (2.) Against vain repetitions in prayer.

III. To make some short observations upon that most excellent form of prayer, which our Lord has here drawn up for us; concluding with a paraphrase of the prayer it self.

I. FIRST then, Let us consider the *several kinds* of prayer. For as to the *nature* of it, or *what prayer is* in general, it is so well understood, that it needs no description. The mere natural light of reason has taught the *theory* of prayer to all men in all ages, and the impulse of mere natural religion has forced even the lowdest and prophaneſt of mankind into the practice of it, when they have been surprized by a sudden danger. We will proceed therefore, to enquire into the *several sorts* of prayer, and they are these:

(1.) *MENTAL*, wherein the desire and affections only, without words, dart up themselves devoutly to God, either by way of petition or praise. This is, indeed, wholly imperceptible, or ought to be made so, to men; but highly pleasing to God, and may be practised whatever company we are in, or whatever business we are about. An example of this we have in our blessed Master, who tho' we read, indeed, of no *prayer* put up by him for the raising of *Lazarus*, we must conclude did

silently by himself pray for it; for when they had removed the grave-stone, he lift up his eyes, and said, \* *Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.* (2.) *Ejaculatory*, which is a like short and sudden fall of the affections, but expressed in words, as that of our Saviour, in his thanksgiving just recited, *Father, I thank thee*: And at another time, the like; † *In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.* And these ejaculations also, if used only upon proper occasions, and without affectation, and from a real inward principle of piety, are not only accepted of God as prayers or praises, but tend to make impressions of seriousness upon the company before whom we utter them. (3.) There are *public prayers*, when at appointed times we meet with the neighbourhood at the house of God, the Church, to offer up in concert, by the mouth of the minister, and along with him, our petitions and thanksgivings, not only on our own account, but for the community, of which we are members, civil and ecclesiastical, and for the whole christian Church in general. This also is a duty, and of no small consequence, as might be proved at large, if I had time; but I shall here only take notice of that one text, wherein the Apostle cautions us, that we should ‡ *not forsake the assembling of our selves together, as the manner of some profane and careless Christians was then, and still is, to the scandal of their profession.* (4.) There are *family prayers*, when we call those together, who are under our peculiar care, to put up their joint requests for such blessings, spiritual and temporal, as are requisite for them as a family, and to praise God for the

\* John xi. 41.

† Luke x. 21..

‡ Heb. x. 25.

protection

protection and mercies we have receiv'd from him in that capacity. And this too has been the constant practice of good men in all ages; and the reason of the thing sufficiently speaks both for the piety and the necessity of it. (5.) But lastly, there are *private prayers*, wherein, retiring into some secret place, apart from all company, and in the eye of none but God, we seriously and devoutly address our selves to him for such mercies as concern our own personal state, not forgetting also our particular friends, and others whom we are bound to pray for. I have reserved this to the last place, because it is that very kind of prayer, which our Lord especially mentions, and directs, in these verses of his sermon now before us. And indeed there is too much occasion it should be pressed upon the consciences of men as a duty; for 'tis justly to be fear'd, that there are many who go to the publick worship of God, and yet neglect the secret devotions they ought to perform at home. I doubt there are too many Christians, who have still so much of the Pharisee in them, that willingly shew themselves in such duties, wherein their religion may be seen of men, and wherein they may serve their credit and reputation; but dispense with themselves in duties which are required to be so private, as only to be observed by God, and which can have no other principle than conscience and true piety. Here, therefore, we have an express command for *closet prayer*: *When thou prayest, enter into thy closet; and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, &c.* By *closet*, is meant any private place, where we may be secure of being neither seen, overheard, nor interrupted in our devotions. And to some such convenience should every Christian retire, at least, twice a day, morning and evening, for that exercise; which has not only been the constant practice



of good men, but has the example of Christ himself to recommend it, as we may gather from the following passage. St. Mark tells us of him, that *in the \* morning rising up a great while before day, he went out into a solitary place, and there prayed.* And St. Matthew, that *† when he had sent away the multitudes, he went up into a mountain apart to pray, and when the evening was come, he was there alone.* The reason of such a practice also pleads for it as a duty. For what can be more reasonable than to begin the day with a pious and devout adoration of that infinite Being, upon which we continually depend for all the necessities and comforts of life; to praise him for his protection of us the past night, and to impore his grace to conduct us through the temptations, and his blessing to prosper us in the business of the day before us? And in like manner to conclude it, when we are going to rest, with thankful acknowledgments of his mercy; beseeching him to pardon the sins we have been guilty of, and humbly recommending our selves, and all that belong to us, to be kept safe by his providence the ensuing night? And that this should be done in secret by our selves, as well as at Church with the congregation, is highly proper; because the public service being to suit the case of others, as well as our own, must be performed only in general terms; whereas we have every one of us, when we consider our own spiritual or temporal circumstances, some things particularly to beg of God, that may be suitable thereto; and on which we may enlarge in private prayer, as there is occasion. Our confessions of sin should also be more particular in secret, than the terms in public service will admit; our petitions for grace against this or that prevailing sin, and our thanksgivings for such mer-

\* Mark i. 31.

† Mat. xiv. 23.

cies as we especially have received, should be so too, and have more room to be so in our closets than in public. In a word, this part of religion, I mean secret prayer, is so natural, so rational, so necessary, that it will be hard to suppose any Christian, who neglects it, to have the fear or love of God in his heart, or any due belief or sense of his dependance upon him. Being assured therefore that secret prayer is a duty, which every one of us owes to God, let us now consider,

II. THOSE two cautions our Saviour here interposes in the performance of it: (1.) Against ostentation. (2.) Against vain repetitions.

(1.) AGAINST *ostentation*. The hypocrites in our Saviour's time were used to run into some corner of the temple, or of the streets, or other places of concourse; and there with hands and eyes lifted up, perform what they called their private prayers; to the intent, that being observed by the multitude, their wondrous piety might be talked of: And thus while they pretended to pay their homage to God, they were in truth idolatrously worshiping themselves; or praying to the people for reputation, rather than to him for mercy; and settling a fund for their own praises, upon the foot of his. Now this being an odious mockery of God, our Saviour testifies his abhorrence of it, and requires us to affect *secrecy* in our prayers, as much as they did *openness* and *observation*: that we should not only *not desire* to be seen of men, when we perform them; but also *studiously contrive to avoid it*, by a strict and close retirement. Nor is the choice of a private *place* for our private devotions, all that is included: there are many little arts of vanity, which hypocrites make use of to defeat the intention of the letter. They will contrive perhaps to be *overheard* at their prayers, tho' they will not be  
*seen*

hend what we desire, without laborious explications; such *flourishes of rhetorick*, and such a *profusion of arguments* to enforce it, as if he were to be deceived or flattered into compliance; or did not consider the reasonableness of what we ask, or were not inclined to do us good without much persuasion. Thus indeed it is sometimes necessary to apply our selves to *men*, who though they should be able to help us, may not know our wants, or may not readily apprehend us; or tho' they do, may perhaps be unwilling, and need to be persuaded: But God has none of these imperfections and weaknesses; he understands our necessities better than we do our selves; he knows both how and when to help us, and from the infinite compassion of his nature, is more ready of himself to help, than we are to desire he should. For this reason *Solomon* discreetly advises us against much talking in our prayers. \* *God is in heaven, and thou upon earth, therefore let thy words be few.* And our Saviour cautions us in this paragraph against *vain repetitions*. Whatever is not requisite to *heighten* our devotions, or whatever is used merely to lengthen them; and whatever may imply, or seem to suppose any of the beforementioned weaknesses and imperfections in God, are the repetitions here condemn'd. In opposition to which our Lord has prescribed us a form or pattern of prayer, extremely short, and yet expressive and significant of every thing in general terms, which we can or ought to desire. Some perhaps will say, If God knows our wants, and will supply them, of what use is prayer? Why should we pray at all? To which we may answer, that as thanks and praise are not required of us, as bringing any profit to God; his glory and honour are the same, however neglectful

\* Eccles. v. 2.

we may be of our duty; so neither is prayer required as necessary for the conveying any knowledge of our wants to God, or persuading him to relieve them; but as an exercise of our faith, and an acknowledgment of our constant dependance upon him. As he who does not give thanks for the benefits he receives, is not worthy of them; so likewise he who does not desire and ask a blessing, does not deserve to have it bestow'd upon him. This therefore being the ground and reason of prayer, not the laying open our wants before God by way of information, or the prevailing with him by florid arguments to help us; but the reducing to practice an humble and believing sense of his power, his goodness, and his other attributes, and of our own dependance upon him; it will appear in the nature of the thing, that prayer it self is still necessary, because 'tis decent, reasonable, and commanded; and yet that abundance of words in prayer is needless, as by the caution here 'tis also sinful; I will now proceed,

III. IN the third place, to make some short and general observations from this divine platform and example of prayer, which our Lord has left us; and they shall be these that follow.

(1.) THAT a form of prayer is lawful, not only in our public services, but in our private devotions too. Our Saviour is speaking here of secret or closet prayer, and he bids us pray *ἑνὶ τόκῳ*, thus, *Our Father*, &c. that is, either *in these words* (for the prayer it self is expressly delivered as a form, *Luke xi. 2.*) or *after this manner*; which will imply not only that we should put up those or the like petitions, but that we should, or may at least, pray also in a *prepared form of words*, as this which he gives us for a pattern is.

(2.) THAT

(2.) THAT *brevity* is most proper and most acceptable in our devotions; not but that upon particular occasions, spiritual or temporal, we may enlarge, as the fervency of our minds, or the necessity of the benefits we pray for, may excite us: for long prayers are not sinful merely as they are long, but as they are *lengthen'd out of a vain notion* of being more acceptable to God thereby; or as they are *spun out by impertinent, needless, and affected repetitions*.

(3.) THAT the method of the Lord's prayer is not strictly and to the utmost niceness binding, yet *in general* it is: that is, we should begin with a decent and devout preface, and end with a like solemn conclusion, and order the matter as well as the manner of petitions; in some general proportion, to the directory here given us, as particularly,

(4.) THAT our desire of *spiritual* blessings should take up more room in our hearts and devotions than of temporal. There is here but one short petition for the necessities of this present life, *Give us this day our daily bread*: but there are two which regard our spiritual state, *viz.* for the forgiveness of our past sins, and the preserving from sin for the future.

(5.) THAT *what tends immediately to the glory of God* in the world, should be the chief subject of our prayers, and most regarded in them. Here are but six petitions in all; and the three first (which have the precedence, as of more concern than the other) do especially relate to the glory and honour of God, as, *Hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven*.

(6.) THAT we should pray for *others*, as well as for *our selves*; for it runs in the plural number, *our Father*; give *us* this day *our* daily bread; forgive *us* *our* trespasses; lead *us* not into temptation; deliver *us* from evil.

(7.) THAT

(7.) THAT *praises*, and particular adoration and acknowledgment of God's *power*, and other glorious attributes, should be join'd with all our prayers. So here, *Our Father, which art in heaven. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.*

(8.) WE must observe, that tho' the *intercession* and *merits of Christ* are not here pleaded or mentioned (because Christ had not then suffered upon the cross, nor ascended into heaven to enter upon his mediatorial intercession for us, when he prescribed this form of prayer;) yet we learn abundantly from other places in the New Testament, that we must *put up all our prayers through him, and in his name*, not hoping to be accepted on any other terms; and indeed he himself instructs us elsewhere of the necessity of this, when he tells us, \* *Whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he will give it you.* Having drawn these general observations, and that in as small a compass as was possible, it now remains only that I conclude with a short paraphrase of the Lord's prayer; and the rather *short*, because it would not be proper to make a long one, since the prayer it self was designed as a pattern of brevity and conciseness in our devotions; and yet every word being so very copious and expressive, it must be such a paraphrase, as may give us at least a general notion of the extent and meaning of each sentence in it.

“ Most glorious God, the Creator and Sovereign  
“ of all things, the Father of our Lord *Jesus Christ*,  
“ and in him by adoption and grace, the Father  
“ of all true Christians; infinite in compassion to-  
“ wards them, and infinitely powerful, as well as  
“ ready to grant, whatever is fit for them to ask :

\* John xvi. 23. & xv. 16.

“ May

“ May thy name be every where ador’d with the  
“ profoundest reverence; thy power, thy wisdom,  
“ thy justice, thy mercy, and all thy other glorious  
“ attributes, which thou displayest not only  
“ in heaven, but from thence over all the world,  
“ be acknowledged with humble awe and adoration,  
“ fear and love by all mankind. Let thy holy  
“ Spirit rule in our hearts, subdue our corruptions,  
“ and engage our affections to a most willing obedience  
“ to thy laws: Let all nations be enlightened with a true  
“ knowledge of thee, and of *Jesus Christ* whom thou hast  
“ sent: Let the heathen become his inheritance, and the  
“ uttermost parts of the earth his possession; and in thy due  
“ time compleat the number of the elect, and bring us  
“ all to thy everlasting kingdom of glory. Shower  
“ down upon us such influences of thy holy Spirit,  
“ as may enable us to submit chearfully to thy will in every  
“ thing, and obey thy commands faithfully; with the same  
“ readiness, sincerity, and delight, as the angels do in  
“ heaven. Vouchsafe to bestow upon us this day, whatever  
“ thy divine wisdom (which best knows what is fit  
“ for us) shall see necessary to the support of our  
“ bodies, to the advantage of our affairs, to the  
“ comfort of our minds, and above all to the spiritual  
“ benefit of our souls: Pardon all our sins, and for the  
“ sake of *Jesus Christ*, lay not upon us the punishment  
“ for them which we deserve: Forgive us, gracious Lord,  
“ as we in obedience to thy command, are heartily ready to  
“ forgive all such as have injured or offended us. Remove  
“ far from us whatever may prove an occasion of sin,  
“ or a temptation to it; or at least, supply us by thy  
“ holy Spirit with strength and resolution effectually to  
“ overcome all temptations. Deliver us from sin, that  
“ worst of evils which can befall us; and from the devil,  
“ the au-  
“ thor

“thor of it: that his malicious subtlety may not  
“be suffered to draw us into wickedness, nor  
“his malicious power be allowed to hurt us  
“here, or to triumph in our damnation and  
“misery hereafter. All this we beg, most graci-  
“ous Lord, as acknowledging that thine is the  
“kingdom; thou only hast right to the ado-  
“ration and service of all thy creatures; thine  
“is the power, thou over-rulest all things both  
“in heaven and earth, and canst do abundantly  
“above whatever we can ask or think; and  
“thine is the glory, the praise of all good things  
“we have enjoy’d already, or do now enjoy:  
“The glory of thy grace in our redemption, and  
“in the conduct of thy faithful servants hither-  
“to by thy word and spirit, is exceeding great;  
“the glory of thy providence is magnified in all  
“events from the beginning of time, and may  
“the glory of both be given thee in the most  
“thankful praises and hallelujahs to all eternity.  
“Amen.







## C H A P. XVIII.

## Of F A S T I N G.

MATTH. VI. 16, 17, 18.

*Moreover, when ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces; that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.*

*But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face:*

*That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.*



THE last of the three great religious duties, in the performance of which our Lord cautions us against ostentation, or a desire of applause, is that of *fasting*, and the caution is delivered in words to this effect.

“ Likewise, when by religious fasts and mortifications, ye pretend to improve devotion, or discipline your selves to virtue, beware that these excellent purposes be not corrupted by a mixture  
“ of

“ of vain-glory, which will turn the whole into a  
 “ scene of gross hypocrisy. Shew not your selves  
 “ abroad, at such a time, with any affected gloomi-  
 “ ness or dejection in your looks, or any formal  
 “ singularities in your air, or gate, or dress, to  
 “ draw the neighbourhood into an opinion of your  
 “ extraordinary sanctity, and severe and mortified  
 “ lives. For if ye thus affect the praise of men,  
 “ those empty praises are all the reward ye are  
 “ like to meet with. God sees through, and de-  
 “ spises, and abhors these little arts of ostentation,  
 “ however men may be deceived by them, and will  
 “ condemn you at the last as hypocrites. Let your  
 “ fasting therefore be, as it ought to be, a pure  
 “ and simple act of religion; and as such, make it  
 “ as private in the performance as ye can; appear  
 “ outwardly as at other times, with the same easi-  
 “ ness and freedom in your mein and countenance,  
 “ the same decency and neatness in your dress; that  
 “ men may not be able to distinguish when ye fast,  
 “ and when ye do not. 'Tis enough, that God  
 “ observes you: Humble your selves in secret be-  
 “ fore him only, and he will publickly reward you  
 “ for it, before men and angels, at the great day  
 “ of recompence.

Now voluntary fasting, tho' not directly com-  
 manded in this place, yet from what our Saviour  
 here says about it, may be supposed to be a christi-  
 an duty. I shall therefore consider,

- I. THE duty of fasting in general, as a duty re-  
 quired under the christian dispensation.
- II. THE ends and usefulness of fasting.
- III. THE proper measures of this duty.

I. LET us consider the duty of fasting, as a  
 christian duty. It may be said, that however our  
 Lord was pleased to excuse his Disciples from fast-  
 ing,

ing, whilst he was with them upon earth, yet he assures those of \* *John the Baptist*, and that in the hearing of his own Disciples, that there should come a time *when they should fast*, and that not only for want of necessary supplies to satisfy their hunger and thirst, which was their case very often; and which some interpreters would have to be the meaning of our Saviour's answer there, but by voluntary and religious fasting, which certainly is the more proper sense of the words: For doubtless the question was proposed concerning such fasting as the disciples of *John* and the Pharisees observed, either voluntarily of themselves, or by direction and institution of their several sects; but they knew very well, that the Disciples of Christ did not observe fasts, so that if he thought fit to answer their question appositely, when he said, that they should fast, he must mean, *religious fasting*, and so, no doubt, his Disciples understood him: For after his ascension into heaven, when the Apostles to whom he had committed the care and government of the Church, began to enter upon that holy ministry, they thought themselves obliged to observe this duty of fasting, as soon as there was a proper occasion for it. It does not appear to be required of them by any express command, nor was there any need for it, the *Jews* being well accustomed to fasting upon all proper occasions. Thus *David* fasted, when he besought the Lord for the child that was born to him, by the wife of *Uriah*. And St. *Luke* relates of *Annah*, a devout woman, that notwithstanding her very great age, she departed not from the temple, but *served God with fastings and prayers night and day*: And many other instances might be given, by which it would appear, that the *Jews* were easily disposed to

\* Matth ix. 14, 15.

this duty; it being a common notion amongst them, that in the time of affliction and suffering, or for the obtaining of some great blessing, they ought to humble themselves, and to pray, which was very properly accompany'd with fasting. Nor was it the notion of the *Jews* only, but of all the *Eastern* nations. How readily did the King of *Nineveh* appoint a fast, upon the threatning of *Jonah*, although a stranger Prophet, and a Messenger from a God whom they did not worship; and how solemn, how strict, how universal was that fast? If it be objected, that this was probably done by the Prophet's direction, and in obedience to him only, for that fasting being an hardship upon human nature, seems not to have been the dictate of mere natural religion: Let us enquire into the practice of other nations, such as *India* and *China*, in the remotest parts of the *East*, who could have no communication with the *Jews*, nor have any thing of divine revelation to guide them; and we shall find, that their philosophers and sects of devout persons, not only taught them many useful maxims of government, and rules of life: but exercised, and do still practice such instances of mortification, and particularly fasting, as might appear incredible, if they were not attested by eye-witnesses of good authority; and by this it is evident, that however these austerities seem a violence upon nature, yet they have been practised, as the dictates of natural religion, and not by imitation only of the *Jewish* discipline. Religious fasting being therefore a practice of all nations, and in all ages, as well before, as in our Saviour's time; no wonder, that he should adopt it into his religion, as a duty to be observed by all his followers. And accordingly, *St. Paul* says of himself, in his second epistle to the *Corinthians*, that he was \*in fastings often. By

\* 2 Cor. xi. 27.

which, having just before mentioned hunger and thirst, that other sort of fasting upon necessity and want; 'tis plain, he means such voluntary fasting, as he thought fit, to enjoin himself the better to dispose him to pray for that grace and assistance, which was requisite to enable him to perform his duty, and to bear his sufferings. And as he performed this duty himself, so doubtless he required the practice of it in all the Churches he planted, as the other Apostles did in theirs; for frequent fasting was an early practice in the christian Churches, as the first ecclesiastical writers inform us. And though it did by degrees degenerate into superstition, and new and strange austerities were added, and many impertinent and burdensome niceties in the observation; and then men began to be proud of their humiliations, to place all holiness, if not all religion, in the performance of such mechanical injunctions, and to fancy that they *merited* at the hands of God thereby: Yet this superstition, these vain additions and false notions being purged away from it at the reformation, our Church discreetly and piously continued the use of fasting, in such manner as our Saviour and the Apostles left it, and it is still as necessary a duty, and as expedient to the proper ends of it as ever.

II. OUR second inquiry therefore is to be, for what *ends* and *uses* in religion, fasting was appointed, and how it may be serviceable to the increase of piety and virtue: For what has been so generally practised by good men, must be supposed to have a tendency to some good purpose; and having always had a place amongst religious duties, it may be taken for granted, that when duly performed, it ministers to some religious ends. Now these are three, (1.) To raise and quicken our devotions; (2.) To humble and punish our selves for sin; and, (3.) To

(3.) To bring our sensual appetites and lusts, under a due subjection for the future.

(1.) *TO raise and quicken our devotions.* When the stomach is loaded, the fumes and vapours arising thence, are apt to cloud the head, to dissipate the powers of the mind, and clog the affections; especially, with regard to such spiritual exercises, as prayer and meditation, wherein the mind should wholly draw it self off from this world, and exert it self with the utmost fervency and vigour towards heaven. Now fasting, as it takes away those impediments, gives greater freedom to contemplation, more vivacity to our apprehension of things spiritual, more scope to a devout and pious soul to exert it self, by how much the less the sensual appetites are indulged. And therefore, though prayer is a duty every day, and so *cannot* always be attended with fasting; and though it is more especially and abundantly to be exercised on the Lord's day, which being a day of spiritual rejoicing to Christians, they *ought not* then to fast; yet the prudence of good men has ever taught them, when they have had *extraordinary* occasions for prayer, and have set apart any of their common days for that exercise, to *join fasting* with it, that they might with greater application and intenseness pour out their souls before God, and keep their hearts more closely to a religious frame; and keep their heads as clear as possible, for the important business they are engaged in. This then, is the first end of fasting.

(2.) *THE second is, to humble and afflict our selves for sin.* When our consciences, awakened by the grace, or startled by some angry providence of God, into a deep sense of guilt (either the guilt of *all our sins* in general, or of any *particular very grievous sin*, that lies heavy upon us) are led to a godly sorrow and repentance, and we are earnestly

desirous of making our peace with God through Christ, by an humble confession, condemning our selves for what we have done amiss, and casting our selves upon his infinite mercy for a pardon. I say, when the case is thus with us, what can be a more proper way to express our inward trouble of our minds, or at least more natural to go along with it, than such a neglect of our bodies, as fasting, which is the common effect of extraordinary grief, even upon any secular occasion? What can be more decent, than thus to shew an holy indignation at our selves, for having offended God, or thus to revenge upon our selves the former sinful indulgence of our lusts and appetites? How fit is it, that that body, by which we have been so oft led into sin, should have its share in the sorrow, and should smart under the discipline of repentance? How reasonable and prudent for us to *judge ourselves, that we should not be judged*; to embrace a voluntary punishment, by the severities of mortification, that we may be comforted hereafter, when those whose sins sat easy upon them in this world, shall be tormented? I would not be mistaken here, as if I thought that *fasting*, or any other mortifications for sin, would *atone for it* in the sight of God, and *merit* pardon for it at his hands, for certainly nothing but the blood of Christ can do that; but I speak of them only, as proper testimonies of the truth and depth of our repentance, of our hatred of sin, and abhorrence of our selves for it; all which together, may recommend us by way of *fitness* and *preparation*, not by way of merit, to such an interest in the mercies of God through Christ, as will at last save us. And to such an use has fasting always been applied by good men, in their private humiliations for sin; and by the authority of religious governments, when they have appointed public and solemn fasts, to deplore the sins of the nation,

nation, to avert the wrath and judgments of God, and to qualify themselves for any special blessing they have to beg of him. But,

(3.) THERE is yet a farther use of fasting: For it may look not only *backward*, as expressive of a deep remorse for sins already past; but *forward* also, to bring our sensual appetites and lusts under a due subjection for the future. When Adam was in his state of innocence, the sensual part of man was under the government of his reason, and that was guided by religion: But the corruption of our nature by his fall, so overthrew the order of things, that the *faculties of the soul*, having rebelled against religion, were justly left themselves to be enslaved by the inferior appetites of the body; and now, as this or the other humour prevails in the blood and animal spirits, our inclinations violently lead us, and our reason is not able to controul them, and the small still voice of religion is not to be heard in such a tumult. Hence lust and intemperance are continually prompting men, and too often prevail with them; and the love of ease and pleasure (even in those who are otherwise good men) make them *somewhat listless to religion*, and very much unqualify them to *suffer hardships* for a good conscience, if they should be called to it. Now fasting goes a great way to rectify all these disorders. By keeping the blood cool, and the spirits at a moderate pitch, it reduces the body to a governable temper, and gives the powers of reason opportunity to exert themselves, and whenever reason can be heard, religion will. By retrenching luxury and excess in eating, and drinking, it starves irregular lust, which is cherished by nothing more than those indulgences. By frequently using men to cross their sensual desires and appetites, and to put themselves under voluntary hardships, it wears off that tenderness and delicacy that so ill becomes the manly constitution



tution of a Christian; inures them to bear much greater difficulties, that may happen to be laid upon them; weans them from the affectation of ease and pleasure; renders that eminent duty of self-denial familiar to them, and so mortifies them to the world and its enjoyments, that their minds are more spiritualized, their relish of religion and a life to come, is heightened, and whatever crosses, and afflictions, and persecutions they meet with in their way to heaven, they have little power to move them. For these reasons St. Paul took care by fastings and mortifications \* *to keep his body under, and bring it under subjection.* And has advised us also of the necessity of it. † *For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.* And thus the primitive Christians prepared themselves for persecution, by beginning it first upon themselves, in a course of severe and frequent mortifications. I have now done with the ends of fasting, and shall proceed to consider,

III. THE proper measures of this duty. And here I must observe in general, that fasting does not only imply the refusing our ordinary sustenance, and refreshments of eating and drinking, but includes also a declining of ‡ *secular pleasures and gratifications*, of every other sort for the time, so as to render the mortification uniform, and to humble the vanity of our minds, as well as curb the appetites of the body, and both these in proportion to that kind of fasting, which we perceive to be necessary for our purpose: I add this last clause, because fasting is of two kinds, the one severe, but short; the other moderate, but long continued.

\* 1 Cor. ix. 27.

† Rom. viii. 13.

‡ Isai. lviii. 3.

THE *first* is fasting in the strictest propriety of the word; when for a whole day, or much the greatest part of it, we reject *all use* of meats, and drink, and pleasures, retiring from the world, and confining our selves to religious meditation, and to devout and fervent prayer, with a due attendance on the worship of God in public, if we can have the opportunity. In this strict manner should be kept those general and solemn fasts, appointed by authority for national humiliation and repentance; attending at Church both parts of the day, to lament before God our own and the nation's sins, and to implore those public blessings, which we are called to pray for at that time; spending the rest of the day in the like pious offices at home, and eating nothing (if our constitutions will bear it) till the evening. This sort of fasting also, may in some cases, by a parity of reason, be proper and requisite for private persons, when their consciences being burdened with remorse for some particular and grievous sin, or with a deep sense of all their sins in general, they desire to perform a special act of repentance, and self-revenge, and to make their peace with God thereupon. Or, when they lie under any great affliction, and would solicit more earnestly the removal of it; or fear any great impending evil, and would avert it, or are desirous of any blessing from heaven, of very great consequence to them, and would exert their utmost fervour and devotion in praying for it. But if (as in some constitutions it may so happen) this strict and total fasting may prove an hindrance to their devotion, prudence join'd with piety must direct them what to do; for after all, *fasting* is in this case (I mean, when intended as an help to prayer) no more than a ministerial or assisting duty; and if it hinder, instead of helping, is no duty at all.

THE *second* sort of fasting is a *course of abstinence* continued for several days together, wherein we confine our appetites not within the bounds of temperance only (for this is always a duty,) but of *self-denial* and *mortification*, to a *very sparing use* of meats and drink, as to the quantity; and a choice of the *plainest, coarsest, and least agreeable* sorts of them, as to the quality; with a general *disregard of pleasure and diversions* the whole time, or at least a very tender and cautious admittance of them, and an industrious care to sit as loose to them as possible. It is not requisite here (as it is in fasting properly so called) to spend all our time in acts of religion and devotion, though it may be fit to intersperse it with *more frequent* returns of prayer than ordinary, according to our spiritual occasions; but we ought always to accompany *this sort* of fasting, as well as the other, with a particular disposition to penitence and piety, a strict watchfulness over our appetites and passions; and a constant diligence in observing our own weakness, and a studiousness of all proper ways and means to get the mastery over them. Now that such an *abstinence* as this, so regulated and so attended, may not improperly bear the name of *fasting*, is plain; both, because in the language of holy Scripture, it is sometimes call'd so (for so must all those places be understood, that speak of *fasting several days together*; except in the case of *Moses, Elijah, and Christ*, who were supported by special miracle :) And because it really answers some of the great *ends* of fasting *as much*, and some others of them *more effectually*, than all the strictness that can be on one single day. It may serve to compose the mind to prayer, and to excite devotion in those, who cannot bear a strict and total fast, but would be hindred by it. It tends to humiliation, repentance, and reformation of life, as it tends to mortification. And indeed, this last is  
the

the peculiar use of it. For mortification is not to be the work of now and then a day, but requires long abstinence, and repeated restraints to effect it, as it should be. The Church therefore has set apart the forty days of *Lent*, as an annual returning season for it; and were this season duly so employ'd, it would be found by experience, to contribute very much, by the grace and blessing of God, to the reducing our sensual lusts, and bringing our bodily appetites under government, to the drawing of our affections from this world, the mortifying us to secular and vain pleasures, and the making us more serious and devout in our religion. Having thus considered the measures of fasting, as applicable and proper to the several ends and uses of it, I shall only add farther on this head, that no certain measures of it can be *universally* laid down, as obligatory to all: Every person, who is so well disposed, as to practise it in any measure, must be left to regulate the particular manner and frequency of it, as age and strength, and constitution, are able to bear. For tho' we are required to mortify the deeds of the body, our religion does not put such hardships upon us, as may destroy the body it self.

I have said nothing here, except in the paraphrase at the beginning of that *ostentation* in this duty of fasting, which our Saviour particularly cautions us against. And I think I need not; that crime being altogether the same in its nature, in this, as in the two former articles of alms and prayer; and having spoken of it there, I should but repeat the same again, if I consider it afresh under this head of fasting. The paraphrase therefore shall suffice for that; and I will proceed to the next part of this excellent sermon on the *Mount*.



## C H A P. XIX.

*Of not laying up treasures upon earth,  
but of laying them up in heaven, and  
of trust in God's providence.*

MATTH. VI. 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26,  
27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33.

*Lay not up for your selves treasures upon earth,  
where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where  
thieves break through and steal.*

*But lay up for your selves treasures in heaven,  
where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt,  
and where thieves do not break through and  
steal.*

*For where your treasure is, there will your  
heart be also.*

*The light of the body is the eye: if therefore  
thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be  
full of light.*

*But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall  
be full of darkness. If therefore the light  
that is in thee be darkness, how great is  
that darkness?*

*No man can serve two masters ; for either he will hate the one, and love the other ; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.*

*Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink ; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on : is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment ?*

*Behold the fowls of the air : for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns ; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they ?*

*Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature ?*

*And why take ye thought for raiment ? Consider the lillies of the field, how they grow ; they toil not, neither do they spin.*

*And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.*

*Wherefore if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven ; shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith ?*

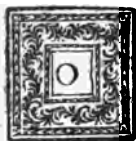
*Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat ? or what shall we drink ? or wherewithal shall we be clothed ?*

*For after all these things do the Gentiles seek ; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.*

*But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.*

*Take*

*Take therefore no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of it self: sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.*



OUR Lord having sufficiently cautioned his Disciples against seeking this world's praise in an ostentatious performance of religious duties, warns them next against a desire of the *wealth* and *riches* of this world. And here he enters upon a doctrine wholly evangelical, proper to no religion, but to that which *he* taught; and agreeable only to that spiritual and heavenly kingdom, which *he* was then erecting. But because it must appear a new and strange precept to the *Jews*, who expected that the kingdom of the Messiah would be founded in the enjoyment of riches and temporal prosperity, he proceeds to argue for the observance of it, by shewing the reasonableness of the duty in several particulars. Thus therefore in effect he speaks to us in the present paragraph.

“MAKE it not the business of your lives to get  
 “and hoard up earthly treasures; set not your  
 “hearts upon them, they are vain in their own nature: The richest furniture wears away by use  
 “and age, and even your gold laid by consumes in  
 “rust; and all are but uncertain possessions, which  
 “ye may easily be deprived of by a thousand accidents. But instead thereof, provide your selves  
 “an inheritance in the world to come; a treasure  
 “which neither violence nor fraud can take from  
 “you, nor time nor misfortunes can destroy. For  
 “whatever you esteem as your happiness, on that  
 “will your hearts and affections be set. If your  
 “judgments be good, ye will rightly discern the  
 “value of heavenly treasures above earthly, and  
 “direct

“ direct your aims and your desires accordingly; but  
“ if your judgments be corrupt and blinded, your  
“ choice will certainly be wrong, and how fatal  
“ must such an error prove! Nor will the folly be  
“ less, to think to *divide* your selves between this  
“ world and the other. For it is impossible to  
“ obey two masters commanding contrary services;  
“ to be devoted faithfully to God, and at the same  
“ time governed by the opposite interests and ma-  
“ xims of this world. Be not therefore solicitous  
“ to *make a figure*, but content your selves with  
“ the necessities of life according to your condi-  
“ tion; and even for these, for your ordinary food  
“ and raiment, be not anxiously thoughtful; but  
“ having employed your industry in the use of ho-  
“ nest and proper means to obtain them, leave the  
“ event to God, depending always upon his provi-  
“ dence, which will not leave you destitute; and  
“ which you see takes care of every other creature.  
“ The birds of the air are incapable of plowing  
“ and sowing, or of the arts of trade and merchan-  
“ dize; all they can do is to go out and *seek* their  
“ food, and God provides it for them: and if he  
“ thus feeds them, will he neglect or overlook the  
“ nobler branches of his family? If he will not  
“ suffer even the birds to want, which only by  
“ *natural instinct* trust in him, much more will  
“ he take care of you, who trust in him by  
“ choice, and glorify him by a *religious and ra-  
“ tional dependance*. But if ye will still be trusting  
“ to your own care, and place your only hopes  
“ therein, consider that how solicitous soever ye are,  
“ how many and wise soever your projects are, they  
“ are all to no purpose, except the providence of God  
“ succeed and bless them; without his assistance ye  
“ can no more add one farthing to your estate, than  
“ one cubit to your stature. And as for your rai-  
“ ment, observe the flowers of the earth, which  
“ have



“ have no thought of their clothing, no care in  
“ the providing of it, and yet no furniture in So-  
“ lomon’s court was so beautiful and glorious. Now  
“ if God bestows such ornaments on the short-liv’d  
“ flowers of the field, which are but of a day’s  
“ continuance, ye must have little faith indeed to  
“ question his concern for you. ’Tis true, the ig-  
“ norant Gentiles, who have gods of wood and  
“ stone, that cannot help them, and who have  
“ neither an interest in, nor any just notion of  
“ happiness in a life to come, are with some shew  
“ of reason carking and solicitous for a provision  
“ in this present world: but ye that are my Disci-  
“ ples should know better. Ye know that ye  
“ have in heaven a most compassionate and Al-  
“ mighty Father, who is thoroughly sensible of  
“ your wants, and able and willing to relieve them.  
“ Ye are born to nobler expectations than this  
“ world can answer; ye have an inheritance in  
“ eternal glory, that requires your best affections,  
“ and your greatest diligence. Employ your care  
“ then in the first place by a life of righteousness,  
“ to secure an interest in that future state of glo-  
“ ry; and such a care shall be so far from occasi-  
“ oning any want of *temporal necessities* (tho’ it di-  
“ vert you from an eager and anxious solicitude about  
“ them) that the providence of God will upon  
“ that very account more especially concern it self  
“ to provide for and supply you with them. Look  
“ not therefore too far forward; every day has its  
“ own trouble and molestation, and why should ye  
“ anticipate the cares and sorrows of many years to  
“ come; which it may be ye may never feel, or if  
“ ye do, it will be soon enough in its own season;  
“ and to partake of them sooner, is to double your  
“ own burden, and to suffer twice under the same  
“ evil.

IN the farther explanation of this paragraph, I shall shew,

- I. THE full extent of the precept ; that we should not lay up treasures on earth, but lay them up in heaven.
- II. THE force of all those arguments distinctly, which our Lord makes use of here to strengthen it.

I. THE full extent of the precept ; which will best appear, by considering each branch of it apart :  
As,

*FIRST*, What is included in the negative, the thing which is here forbidden us, *laying up treasures on earth*. And this having in it several degrees of evil ; and *every one* of them by it self being an offence against the precept, as well as *all of them together*, it will be necessary to trace them step by step, if we would be exact in our discovery.

(I.) *FIRST* then, there may be *too great an opinion* of the *worth* and *excellency* of earthly treasures ; a vain notion of the *sufficiency* of these things to make a man happy ; and this either proceeds from, or produces (for it is necessarily attended with) cold and slightly apprehensions of true spiritual happiness, the pleasures of religion, and the expectations of a life to come. The worldling has *heard* indeed of the comforts which pious souls take in the contemplation of God's love to them, and the exercise of their own to God ; he has been *told* of a most delightful intercourse with heaven in prayer, and praises, and receiving the holy sacrament : but these employments being spiritual, and he a stranger to them, it passes all for mere enthusiasm ; or at least his ideas of the delight that is to be found in them are confused, and faint, and ineffectual. He has been taught, and *pretends* to believe many glorious things

things of a felicity immense and everlasting, reserv'd beyond the grave, for the spirits of just men made perfect; but the futurity and distance of them is such, that even their greatness and eternity do very little move his affections. Whereas this present world and its enjoyments are at hand, the reality of them is visible, and the impressions they make upon him strong, as they are the objects of sense: the nature of them is suited to a corrupt and carnal heart, at *enmity with God*, and earnestly seeking happiness in *it self*, or any thing rather than in *him*. He finds them in esteem with almost every body, the daily conversation turns upon them, and the common endeavours of mankind are center'd in them: which puts a mighty bias on his judgment, to approve and admire what presents it self under so many recommendations. As this is true of the *enjoyments of this world* in general, so is it also with regard particularly to *riches*, the grand instrument of procuring all the rest. The pomp and hospitality of the great, with the respect and honours that are paid them, cannot but draw a secret veneration to that wealth of which they are the consequents. The ordinary conveniencies and comforts of life, nay even necessities of it too, being not to be had without money, is a most sensible argument with men to value it. And beside all this, the very precepts of their education prepare them in favour of it: for the father leaves a plentiful portion to his son, and telling a grave story of the labours and hazards he underwent in raising it, gives him strict charge, and many directions for the improvement. The master, together with the mysteries of his trade, instructs his servant in the more secret ones of unreasonable gain and profit. And thus posterity falls of course into the vain sentiments of those that went before, and money is become the idol of the world. Now that this overbearing

bearing *opinion* and *admiration* of *riches* (though it were possible it should proceed no farther) is *sinful*, appears, in that it carries with it (as I observed above) a disregard and disesteem of spiritual things; 'tis a formal decision (though a very base and false one) that, earthly treasures are more valuable than heavenly; that the interests of this world are preferable to those of another, that money is better than religion, and mammon a more useful and a more powerful friend than God. It ascribes a sufficiency in the creature, which can be only found in the Creator; and draws us into other wicked and dangerous notions: For those who think so highly of riches, will look upon poverty with contempt, on the duty of self-denial as a jest, and on a state of affliction as a certain mark of God's disavour; though the holy Scriptures, in every part of them, teach us quite the contrary doctrine. A Christian, therefore, (if he will obey this precept of our Saviour) ought to esteem riches, and all other worldly enjoyments, only according to their *true* use and value, without regard to popular maxims, or to the passions and appetites of corrupted nature. For I deny not that the things of this world, and money as well as any thing else, have something of a value in them; the danger is in *over-rating* them. They have a *goodness*, but not an *excellence*; they are in some measure *necessary to the comfort and convenience of human life*, but by no means *sufficient to a real and rational happiness*. Hitherto we have considered the opinion only, and the esteem of earthly treasures; but it seldom stops here, the next step is naturally,

(2). A *coveting* and *desire* of what appears so excellent to a carnal mind. Not that men do always proceed herein in an argumentative way, examine first the advantages of riches, conclude them valuable, and then desire them: but being habitually

inured to an high opinion of these things, they desire them at the same time by a sort of moral instinct, as they do their food by a natural appetite. Yet it is nevertheless distinctly to be considered here, as one step farther towards the *laying up treasures upon earth*; and if the esteem of those treasures be sinful, the *desire* of them is still a greater sin, because it is an error of the *affections*, added to an error of the *judgment*. And that *it is* indeed an error of the *affections*, will appear by this consideration, that whenever it prevails as a ruling principle in the heart, 'tis *inconsistent* with the *love of God*. For so we are taught by St. John, \* *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world: If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him*. If therefore the *love of God* be a duty (as sure it is, if either religion, reason, or gratitude can make it so) the *love of riches*, which so effectually undermines and overthrows it, that 'tis impossible one heart should hold them both together, must needs be a very grievous sin. And because it does more than any thing debauch the mind from God, and sets up this world as an idol, in competition with him, 'tis call'd *idolatry*, in the inspired language of St. Paul. Add to this, that the same Apostle, St. Paul, has declar'd it to be the *root of all evil*; and what he means by that, his own words immediately foregoing will explain to us: † *For they that will be rich fall into temptations and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition*. Where this exorbitant love of money is indulged, it breaks down all the bounds and fences of conscience, and hurries men with loose reins into any sin whatever, that may forward their obtaining of it. What vile hypocrisy, dissimulation, and flattery; what lewd-

\* 1 John ii. 15.

† 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10.

ness, what lying and cheating, what oppression and treachery; what perjuries, murders, treasons, and other enormous villanies, are chargeable daily upon this prevailing passion? So very justly has *Solomon* observed, \* *He that makes haste to be rich, shall not be innocent.* And surely that which thus abounds with the seeds of every other sin, must it self be a very great one. Yet perhaps we are not severely to understand this of *every* desire of riches; though to distinguish with exactness, how far we may go in this matter, is somewhat difficult, and harder still to regulate our selves in practice by such a distinction. *St. John*, when he forbids us to *love the world, and the things that are in the world*, could never design to discharge us *absolutely* from *all manner* of affection to any thing here; for then even *natural affection to our relations*, and the delight we take in them, would be unlawful. Nor can *all degrees* of the *desire of riches*, be included in that, or in any other prohibition: for riches are the gift of God, and reckoned up amongst the blessings of his providence to *Solomon*; and surely what God thinks fit to *bestow* as a blessing, we may desire as such. The desire of riches, therefore, is not *simply* and *absolutely* criminal; but as attended with certain vicious adherences, from which 'tis very hard to purify it. Remove what is *evil* in it, and it becomes lawful. Now one evil of it, as we have seen by the antithesis in that text of *St. John*, last cited, lies in this, that it draws us *from the love of God*, by suffering the world and its enjoyments to usurp a sovereignty in our hearts, which is and can be due only to *him*, as our supreme good. Another evil (pointed out by *St. Paul*) is the *impetuosity* of that desire, leading us into abundance of sins to accomplish it, as fraud, violence, oppression, treache-

\* Prov. xxviii. 20.

ry, neglect of religion, &c. To make the desire of riches lawful then, it must be so purified, as to be thoroughly consistent with those two fundamental duties, the *loving of God above all things*, and *our neighbour as our selves*. Let us but make sure in the first place, that God remain still the sovereign object of our affections; that our desire of riches be not any the least diminution of our love of him, nor any way divert us from an hunger and thirst after righteousness; that whatever we obtain of earthly treasures, we be ready and willing to part with them all, if there be occasion, for the sake of religion; and that our principal aim in desiring them, be not the gratification of our own covetous fancy, but sincerely and really the glorifying God, by good works of piety and charity. Let us also be strictly careful, that it lead us not one step awry, to the prejudice of our neighbour, that we entertain not one thought of getting them by sinful methods, or using them to dishonest and unworthy purposes. And lastly, that we desire them not, but in a cool and moderate way, scarce one degree above indifference, and with a constant and entire submission to the will of God, whether we obtain them or not: And *then* perhaps there may be no harm in the desire of riches. I say, if all this be *practicable*, and the desire be thus *in fact restrained and regulated*, I shall make no scruple of granting, that the prohibition in this paragraph of our Saviour's sermon, and others to the same purpose, do not reach it. But if on the contrary, it appear (as I believe it will) *impracticable*, through the common corruption of our nature, the strength of our passions, and the difficulty of attending at once to so many nice and burdensome (however necessary) limitations; we must look upon the desire of riches as a *forbidden appetite*, and correct all motions toward it as sinful; confining our selves to  
that

that discreet petition of *Agur*, *Give me neither poverty nor riches, but feed me with food convenient for me.* For I would have it observed here, once for all, that I am not speaking against the desire of so much of this world as is necessary for the due support of our selves, and those that depend upon us, or such a provision for them as is suitable to the rank and station wherein God has placed us : But I speak of *riches*, or *superfluity* and *abundance*, the notion of which is to be measured by mens other circumstances. And in judging of this, every man for himself, there must be a strict and careful impartiality; that we do not first, by our pride, presume upon an higher rank than really belongs to us, and create *imaginary necessities* thereupon, and then pretend to justify our *covetousness*, in order to support our *vanity* : But let us form a true and modest judgment of our station, and desire no more than that station really calls for. I must now go on to,

(3.) THE third degree or instance of laying up treasures upon earth : And that is the *actual labour* and *pursuit in obtaining them*, solicitously projecting in the several arts and methods for that purpose; contriving all possible ways, and putting the scheme in execution, with a perfect drudgery of diligence, and laying hold of all opportunities to grow rich. This follows upon the desire of riches: For what a man desires he endeavours to compass, and the desire still encreases with the endeavour, and the endeavour is again more vigorous in proportion to the desire, so that the thing is infinite, and there is no end of coveting and procuring riches. I am sensible that the matter treated of here, will need greater caution than the former : For though the *desire of riches*, may, with some limitation, be *lawful*, it is in no case enjoined as a *duty*, and therefore may be let alone without offending; whereas  
industry



industry (the subject of our present question) tho' it may in some cases and degrees be unlawful, yet in some also, and indeed, in general, it is a duty, a positive part of our religion, and the contrary to it, *sloth* and *idleness*, a notorious sin. The *Proverbs of Solomon* are very copious on this head, and the *New Testament* inspiration is not behind-hand in this matter. St. Paul has delivered a general Canon, that if any man will not work, neither should he eat, and presses his own example, \* who wrought with labour and travel night and day, to maintain himself. And amongst his exhortations to the *Romans*, this is one, that they should not be † *slothful in business*. Our Saviour, though he whip'd the buyers and sellers out of the Temple, yet he did not out of their shops; but honoured laborious and honest professions, by choosing Disciples of such employments. The labour therefore, which we are here speaking against, as sinful, is to be distinguished from honest industry.

(1.) IN the object of it, *riches* and *abundance*. If we look back to the primitive institution of labour, we find it enjoined us in part of *punishment* for *Adam's* disobedience. From whence 'tis very plain, the design of it could never be to supply us with *power* and *riches*. But *what* was the proper and appointed object of our labour by that sentence, the words of it sufficiently intimate, ‡ *In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat thy bread*. We were not bid to labour, that we might engross as much of the world as we could get; but to procure thereby the *necessaries of life*, for our selves and those that depend upon us; including such a provision for the future, as may put our children into a way of living, by trades or professions, suitable to the rank we bear. If any more be aim'd at, it must

\* 1 Thes. iii. 8, 10.      † Rom. xii. 11.      ‡ Gen. iii. 19.

be only the glorifying God, and doing good to others by works of charity, according to that rule of St. Paul, \* *Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.* Or, as it is expressed upon another occasion, that † *our abundance may be a supply to the want of others.* But this is a design too generous for a narrow-spirited and selfish world to think of; and yet I dare be bold to affirm, that for such good offices ought all the endeavours of encrease, and the command of riches, chiefly to be intended. Works of charity, and the promoting and propagating true religion, are the only warrantable views of labour that I know of. But where the design is merely the *raising of an estate*, or the *scraping together so much money*, let the methods by which they pursue it, be never so honest, their improvement never so just, the end denominates the action, and it becomes unlawful. I fear this will be thought a very hard saying, by those (even better men than ordinary) that are in a way of growing rich, and have hitherto pleased themselves with the fairness and integrity of the means they use to become so, and never questioned that in the use of such fair means, they might lawfully get as much as ever they could; to these it will be an hard saying, but who can help it? The precept is very plain, *Lay not up for your selves treasures upon earth*; so plain, that one would think it equally impossible to be unobserved or evaded, by what political glosses soever the covetousness of men may think to interpret away a command, that lies so directly against them. But farther, labour may become sinful, not only by its *object*, but,

\* Eph. iv. 28.

† 2 Cor. viii. 14.

(2.) BY *excess in the measures* of it, by a too great eagerness and intenseness in labouring, even for a lawful end, the necessities of life, and much more for an unlawful object, riches and abundance. I call it excessive, when it either breaks the health, or so takes up our time from the service of God, as to draw us into a neglect of the necessary duties of religion, in public, in private, or with our families. Whenever it thus loosens our affections, or withdraws us from the daily practice of prayer, meditation, and reading of the word of God, 'tis no longer laudable industry, but sinful labour. *Martha* was undoubtedly well employ'd, as to the end of her diligence, when she was preparing an entertainment for our Saviour, yet see how he rebukes her in favour of her sister *Mary*, who was more intent in hearing his divine instructions, and minding the spiritual concerns of her own soul. \* *Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her.* I proceed now (as those busy worldlings usually do, of whom I am speaking) to,

(4.) THE fourth and last particular prohibited, the *boarding up of treasures, when acquired.* Not caring to expend, but keeping together all they have gotten; either from a vanity of *mere possession*, to please their eye, and entertain their fancy; or by way of reserve against the possibilities of *future want*; or upon the project of *leaving much wealth to their children*, to advance and render them more considerable in the world. Now the first of the cases will be allowed, by all that are not concerned in it themselves, to be sinful. Men generally speak ill of those covetous wretches that lay up money out of a base affection to the coin, that

\* Luke x. 41, 42.

with such delight count their cash, and review their securities, it goes against the heart of them to part with any thing, but in a way of usury and increase; and are so far from doing any good with it to their neighbourhood, by hospitality or charity, that they almost starve their own families, in the midst of this abundance. There is no need, I say, of convincing the *generality* of men, that this is sinful and prohibited; but those that are guilty of the practice, want to be convinc'd, and they may be so, if they will but compare it with those positive texts of Scripture, wherein God, who is still the direct proprietor of all their wealth, prescribes to them what they shall do with it. The paragraph we are upon expressly forbids them to *lay it up*, or keep it as an useless treasure by them. St. Paul orders Timothy to \* *charge them that are rich in this world, that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate*. And St. Peter charges them to † *use hospitality one to another, without grudging*. And it is elsewhere declared, that ‡ *if any man provide not for his own, especially for those of his own house, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel*. But here perhaps the third class of men (who pretend to be laying up for their children) taking advantage of this last cited text, will think themselves not only fairly acquitted, but even value themselves upon laying up treasures, as discharging a *duty* instead of committing a *sin*. 'Tis fit we should consider this matter a little more carefully, for no mistake is so fatal as betwixt sin and duty. Let them then, in the first place, examine well their own consciences, whether their design and end in laying up, is really the *benefit of their children*, or whether it be not rather the indulging a vanity of their own,

\* 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18.    † 1 Pet. iv. 9.    ‡ 1 Tim. v. 8;

their

their love of money? 'Tis possible they may deceive themselves. If while they pretend to be doing this for their children, they hoard up treasure to leave them *only when they die*; and will either not bestow any due proportion of it in the mean time, in giving them a liberal and advantageous education; or not enable them by handsome settlements upon marriage, or encouragements that may forward 'em in a way of business, to live comfortably and creditably in the world at present; I will venture to determine, that (let them pretend what they will) their *children's benefit* is not the principle by which they are acted, but their own *covetous fancy*. In the next place, supposing they are in earnest, and that the wealth they are laying up, is all design'd to make their children rich and great, to raise a family, and advance them much above the rank they were born to, this can never be justified by that text they cite for it; 'tis not such a *providing for one's own*, as the Apostle speaks of. He is considering the case of widows maintain'd by the public charity, and directs as a thing highly equitable, that such of them as have relations able to take care of them, should not be *cast* upon the Church, for a maintenance, but supported at the private charge of those relations. And this is plainly in the prime intention and scope of the context, what the Apostle means by *providing for our own*, the relieving of our poor relations, that they may not be chargeable to the public. But if we will needs interpret it, of laying up fortunes for our children, (which has not the least connection with his argument) it cannot reasonably be extended farther, than that beside what is necessary to their *present maintenance and education*, we should endeavour to leave them *so much, as, join'd with their own industry, in a way of business suitable to our rank, may probably secure them from want*. Thus far, I doubt not,

not, the laying up something for posterity is a provision fit to be made (and if it be in our power to accomplish it) a *duty* too. If it be objected, that this is still *laying up*. I answer, that our Saviour speaks only against laying up *riches* or *treasures*, viz. more than the condition and degree God has placed us in requires: But what is really *necessary to the support of that condition*, does not fall under that prohibition; so that this may be laboured for, and laid up, without scruple, a due proportion of it being disposed in charity. Nor do I deny, that where the providence of God does *extraordinarily* bless a moderate industry, or pours in a great accession of wealth *without our seeking*, we may innocently leave this to our children (provided still that our charities encrease together with our abilities) and by this, they may honestly be raised to a station higher than that to which they were born; but this is not properly *OUR laying up*, and therefore does not fall within a prohibition, which only concerns our worldlymindedness and love of riches.

LET us now consider the *other* case mentioned under this head, the laying up by way of *reserve against the possibilities of future want*. And here also I deny not, that a prudent provision for the *future*, as well as present supply of our selves in things that are *necessary* to life, or the comforts of it, is lawful. So *Solomon* advises, \* *Go to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways, and be wise: which provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest*. But then we are to do it without any *uneasy solicitude*, without *trusting in riches*, or *distrusting the divine providence*; with a *freedom in using at present what we possess*, so far as is necessary and suitable to our condition; and with a *liberal distribution* to the poor, that we defraud not

\* Prov. vi. 6, 8.

*them* of what God has laid up for them in our hands. But here perhaps it may be enquired, whether *all* laying up for the future be not a distrust of the providence of God? I answer, No: because his *promises*, as they are declared to us in his holy word, are the rule and measure of our trust. Now God has no where promised to sustain, and provide for those that undo themselves by sloth or thoughtlessness, or extravagance; and therefore to depend upon him in such a way, is presumption, instead of trust in God. And on the contrary, to provide for our future living, by the measures of reasonable frugality, and common prudence, and with a serene and easy mind, is so far from a distrust of God's Providence, that it is really trusting in him in the way that he requires; that is, in the moderate use of means, and not in dependance upon unpromised miracles. 'Tis unhappy, that we know not how to keep out of extremes, that we know not how to be *frugal* without being *penurious*, nor *careful* without *anxiety*, nor *easy* without being *careless*, nor *liberal* without *extravagance*; and yet these are distinctions that must be practically made, or else we confound the differences of vice and virtue, sin and duty. And thus I have endeavoured largely to explain, what our Saviour means here by laying up treasures upon earth, and to distinguish as justly as I could, in what particulars and degrees the sinfulness of it does consist. I have been the larger upon it, because this prohibition seems generally to be misunderstood, or not considered in practice, even by those who are esteemed very good men, who (as if there was no such precept in the christian religion) take it for granted, that they may procure as much of the treasures of this world, as honestly they can, and do accordingly lay up in store for themselves and their posterity, and commend those who do the same, under the character  
of

of notable and thrifty; *who join house to house, and lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth.* But such as are really good men, and desire to govern their consciences, and their practice by the direction of God's word, will, I hope, be convinced by what has been said, that this precept lays a restraint upon men's *overvaluing, desire, pursuit of, and laying up* of riches.

I proceed now,

**SECONDLY,** To shew what is meant by *laying up treasure in heaven*, which is the *positive* part of the precept in this paragraph of our Saviour's sermon. The meaning thereof in general is, that we should make it our chief endeavour to secure to our-selves an interest in the love of God, and the inheritance of a blessed eternity; and so it is in truth, an exhortation to all and every duty, that lies in a Christian's way to heaven, but it seems more especially to include, and to be understood of these three.

(1.) **FAITH**, or a firm belief of the infinite (tho' as yet invisible) glories reserved in heaven, for those who love and obey God. And this is both the *duty*, and the *comfort* of a Christian; 'tis this important secret that bears up his spirits, carries him through all the storms of life, with a serene and chearful temper. *He is troubled on every side, yet not distressed; he is perplexed, but not in despair.* Losses and misfortunes follow one upon the neck of another; poverty presses hard upon him; disappointments blast and baffle him; contempt is daily treading on his heels; insults and injuries meeting him at every corner; long sickness consumes his body, or sharp and violent pains torment it; slanders and malice wound his reputation, and a great variety of evils exercise his patience. What is it therefore that supports him under all these trials,

Z

but



but the hopes that heaven will make amends at last: \* *For this cause, says St. Paul, we faint not, but tho' our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.* I need not prove such a faith to be our duty, the Apostle having declared in a few words, that † *whosoever cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* And that this duty is included in this precept, of *laying up treasures in heaven*, is plain by visible connection. I proceed therefore to the second duty implied in it.

(2.) *HEAVENLY mindedness*; or a sovereign and prevailing esteem of spiritual things, the blessedness of heaven, and the religion that prepares us for it, above all worldly business or enjoyments whatsoever. Under this head we suppose the Christian in a *smooth and prosperous* state; the riches of the world, and perhaps the honour of it too; the respect and friendship of all about him; the innocent pleasures and comforts of this life; and, in a word, the bounty of an indulgent providence, attending and blessing him on every side. And he that in these circumstances can keep his eye fixed upon a better world to come; that pursues the interest of his *soul*, with a more deep and real concern than any *secular* interest; that does in choice and affection seriously prefer the delight of glorified spirits (praising and adoring God to all eternity) before the most agreeable of the earthly pleasures and diversions, that offer themselves to his enjoyment

\* 2 Cor. iv. 16, 17, 18.

† Heb. xi. 6.

here, and does accordingly entertain himself with a truer relish in the contemplation of those blessed hopes, in practising to improve himself in a devout and holy love of God, and tuning his heart beforehand to celestial praises, and exercising himself to godliness in the several duties of religion, than in either the grandeur or the wealth of this world, or in any thing else that pleases or employs him in it; he that does thus, may properly be said to *lay up treasures in heaven*, for his heart is there already; and in so doing performs the duty enjoyn'd here by our Saviour, which *St. Paul* has well explained to this purpose, in his Epistle to the *Colossians*,  
\* *Set your affections on things above, and not on things on the earth.*

(3.) THE third and last duty which I shall insist on, as particularly included in that of laying up treasures in heaven, is *charity to the poor*. The covetous worldling thinks himself very wise in saving all that he can scrape together, in putting it out to use, or hoarding it up in bags, or purchasing estates with it, and thinks all is *thrown away* that is given to relieve the want of the poor, to feed the hungry, to cloath the naked, or release the prisoner. But time perhaps will shew, at least eternity will, that this is a very great mistake, and that he who is at the most expence in charity, lays up the largest and the most lasting treasure. That very money which he seems to scatter about with such a careless hand, is really put out at the highest interest, and upon the best security; *For he that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the Lord, and that which he hath given will he pay him again.* God is pleased to stand answerable for what is so disposed of, and tho' we can merit nothing from him by our charity, or any other good action (because we are

\* Col. iii. 2.

under previous obligations to it as a duty) yet he has graciously encouraged us thereto, by assuring us that \* he will abundantly repay us, either *here*, by the blessing of his providence to encrease the remainder; or in a *better world*, by the rewards of *everlasting happiness*. † *Thou, when thou makest a feast, says our Saviour, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: For thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.* ‡ *St. Paul also charging those that are rich in this world, that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; puts them in mind, that so to do is but laying up for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life. So that what we disperse in works of charity, is so far from being lost to us, or thrown away, that it is laid up for us, as a fund or treasure in heaven; where we shall find it again, though not in specie, yet in such returns of happiness and glory, as shall abundantly satisfy, and for ever bless us. And that what I have said upon this subject is not only true, but is directly and intentionally within the meaning of our Saviour's precept, is plain enough by his way of expressing it in St. Luke, where the substance of this same discourse is recorded, || *Sell that ye have, and give alms: Provide your selves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens, which faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth.* And thus I have gone thro' my first general head, and shewn the full extent of this precept in both parts of it, that we should *not lay up treasures on earth*, and that we should *lay them up in heaven*.*

I come now to my

\* Prov. xi. 25. Luke vi. 38.

† Luke xiv. 13, 14.

‡ 1 Tim. vi. 18, 19.

|| Luke xii. 33.

II. SECOND general head, to shew the force of every distinct argument our Saviour here makes use of against *laying up treasures upon earth*. And these may be reduced to two heads; such as respect the greedy affections of riches, and such as relate to an uneasy and disquieting provision for the future.

1. SUCH as relate chiefly to the *affection for, or love of riches*: And these are,

(1.) THE *uncertainty of riches*. Lay not up for your selves treasures upon earth, *where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal*. To the same purpose Solomon both exhorts and argues, \* *Labour not to be rich, cease from thine own wisdom: Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings, they fly away, as an eagle towards heaven*. And certainly, were we but disposed to be wise at the cost of other peoples experience, rather than our own, we should save our selves much grief and vexation, by setting only such a value upon the possessions of this world, as we would upon things we expect to lose, or to have taken from us. Do we not see, by how many accidents those who had riches, are on a sudden reduced to poverty? By fire, by shipwrack, by robbery, by the villany or misfortunes of a bankrupt, what a mighty alteration in our circumstances may be made in four and twenty hours? Christianity therefore, which is the truest *prudence*, as well as the best religion, teaches us to sit loose to all the perishing enjoyments of this world. A temper which St. Paul has eloquently described in his first Epistle to the *Corinthians*. † *It remains, says he, that they who rejoice, be as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the*

\* Prov. xxiii. 4.

† 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30, 31.

*fashion of this world passeth away.* And our Saviour warns us, that treasures upon earth are slippery and uncertain, vain, and easily lost; and because they are so, not worth a wise man's laying up. But there are other treasures that cannot fail us, and are not subject to any such contingencies: Treasures laid up in heaven, are out of the reach of violence or chance; securing an interest there, we have *obscured that better part, which shall not be taken from us.* The glories of another world are an inheritance perfectly secure, *a kingdom which cannot be shaken*; there, and there only, let our hearts and hopes repose themselves.

(2.) THE second argument is drawn from the *ill effect*, which the laying up earthly treasures is like to have *upon the religion of our minds*; in alienating our affections and attention from the service of God, and debauching the whole heart, our time, our care, and industry, to the service of riches. *Where a man's treasure is, there will his heart be also. No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.* The heart is the seat of affection, from thence flow desire and hope, and fear and joy, and all of that nature, and these all have their propensity to happiness; and therefore he who places his happiness in the abundance of the things of this world, the motions of his heart tend chiefly to those things; as on the contrary, he who places his happiness in the rewards of another world, the operations of his soul are influenced by the expectations of such future blessings, and the heart desires spiritual things, and rejoices in the hope of that glorious state which is to be revealed hereafter. Now the belief and hope of future things, in that state of glory which Christ has revealed and promised, must of necessity much abate the inordinate love

love and covetous desire of treasuring up temporal things. And on the contrary, the laying up treasures upon earth, will take off the heart and affection from religion, and the expectation of an inheritance in the world to come. This was visible at the first preaching of the Gospel, when very few rich men came into it. What a sad shipwreck did the young disciple make, who because he had great possessions, and could not bear the thoughts of parting with them, rejected the salvation offered him, and laid aside his pretensions to the heavenly kingdom! The parable concerning the excuses of those invited to the feast, that one had married a wife, another taken a farm, and a third was to prove his new-bought oxen, was intended to expose the evil consequences of worldly things, and the prejudices they raise against the invitations of the Gospel. And of the same nature also is the parable of the seed, which being scattered into the stony ground, which is a mind over-grown with cares, and the desire of riches, is rendered altogether unfruitful, and of no encrease. Nor does it only wean the affections of a man from the inward power and principle of religion, but from the public worship of God. It may be an odious concession, and yet a true one, that *too many* of those that do frequent the Church, come thither not from any pious and devout propensity to the duties of the place, or any fixed and serious regard to the interest of their souls, but for fashion sake, or other secret ends of hypocrisy: and yet these people, (how great soever their sin may be in the sight of God, which they must certainly answer for to him) do however pay an outward complement of respect, by frequently appearing there. But the atheism of a worldly-minded man, whose time and thoughts are so enslaved to the pursuit of riches, that he can very seldom find in his heart to spare one hour or

two in a day to wait upon the service of God in public, is the worse offence of the two, because he passes an open slight upon religion, and his neglect is scandalous. We shew our love to God in our public acknowledgments of him, in praying to him, and praising him in christian assemblies; and I shall not scruple to affirm, that all Christians are bound, where they have opportunity, and no unavoidable impediment, to worship God in the offices of the Church, in the use of which, the greater the company, the more available the devotion. But I must charge it upon the love of riches, and the solicitous endeavours of men for the treasures of this world (amongst other causes) that there is so visible and so scandalous a neglect of the service of God in public; so that while the world has many servants, God has but a few: And thus it will be while earthly treasures engross our love, our care, and diligence.

2. I proceed now to those arguments, which our Saviour uses against an *uneasy and disquieting provision for the future*. And by these he does not argue against a moderate and prudent care to provide what is necessary for our selves, and such as depend upon us, but only labours to take us off from an undue *perplexity, solicitude, and distrust of God's providence, in our care about such things*. He argues therefore,

(1.) FROM the merciful care which God takes of *all* his creatures, even those of the lowest rank, the most inconsiderable little bird is provided for every day, at the expence of its Almighty Creator, and by the superintendency of his providence. Even the grass and the lillies of the field, incapable of any solicitude for themselves, and unregarded by human care, spring up in their season, and look fresh and beautiful, and are more finely clothed by the great God of nature, than *Solomon* was in all  
his

his glory: And does God concern himself for creatures that are so much below us, which can only glorify him accidentally, not intentionally, by our reflection upon them, not their own, and whose very beings are design'd to perish within a little time? and dare we not trust him with the care of us and ours, whom he has made in a more excellent species, qualified with more direct capacities to serve and praise him, formed for eternity, objects of his grace in this world, and designed to be heirs of glory? will he suffer us to starve, who will not let the meaner parts of his creation want what is necessary to their support, or suitable to their rank in the creation?

(2.) A second argument is, *We are not sure that all our care will do the business*; it is not certain of success. A man can no more add to his *estate*, than to his *stature*, though he be never so circumspect and industrious, except it pleases God to bless his industry, and forward his increase. Why then should men vex and torment themselves with the projects and designs of obtaining that which it may be God will never suffer them to possess and enjoy? and why should they not rather, with the moderate use of means, apply themselves to God by prayer, and lay the stress of all their hopes and expectations upon his bounty and blessing, not upon their own sollicitude?

(3.) His third argument is, that *after all these things the Gentiles seek*, the Gentiles, who knew not God, nor his providence; but had been trained up in notions of a blind chance and fortune, which favour'd some, and frown'd upon others, without any regard to equity, and which yet their poets taught them might be over-ruled by prudence.



*Nullum numen habes, si sit prudentia; sed te  
Nos facimus, fortuna, deam, cæloque locamus.*

So that a wise projecting man might still (according to their sentiments) have the command of his fortune. Such as these were carking and solicitous to provide for themselves, since plodding and good management were supposed to have such a commanding stroke in the event of things, and since their religion was so far from teaching them dependance on the wise and merciful care of the deity for their relief, that fortune (their supposititious providence) was represented either as a thoughtless chance, or an unjust and partial being, and an enemy to far the greater part of mankind. But *Jews*, to whom our Saviour spoke, and *Christians*, for whose direction and support these precepts and arguments were intended, being enlightened by revelation, should know better things. They, as they are convinced by their religion, reason, and observation of the superintendency and wisdom, the power and goodness of God, in the government of human affairs, and of every circumstance of our lives, are inexcusable, if they do not trust in him, and depend upon him, or if they fret themselves into the same perplexity that heathens do on such an occasion.

(4.) It may very well take the place of another argument, that our Saviour here gives a formal and positive *promise*, that if we seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, all the necessities of this life shall assuredly be provided for us. The generality of the world are mistaken in nothing more (and no mistake can be more fatal) than in what they call *securing the main chance*. They take it to be the getting riches, or at least a competent livelihood. Religion and the interests of  
eternity

eternity are considered (if at all) but as a second rate importance. But here our blessed Saviour puts things in their proper order, and shews that the holiness of a Christian, and the happiness of heaven, are indeed the *main chance* to be secured, and even the necessities of this life are of far inferior consideration: If we do sincerely make the *other* our chief care and request, and the glorifying God our principal business and endeavour, these shall be thrown in too *ex abundanti*, by the mercy of a gracious God. And can we desire a better security against want than this? The Son of God engages here his word and honour, that the pious Christian, who makes religion his first and greatest care, shall not need to be solicitous about temporal necessities, they shall certainly be supplied to him; he shall never want. Upon such assurance we may safely rest, for heaven and earth shall sooner pass away, than one jot or tittle of his promise fail. Laying aside therefore, all anxiety about these matters, let us in all our straits still say with *David*, \* *Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou so disquieted within me? hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.*

(5.) THE concluding argument is, that *sufficient to the day is the evil thereof*. Though we should fix our selves to all the studied calmness we are able, yet for our sins the providence of God has order'd such a vicissitude in all things here, that something or other possibly may happen to try our patience every day we live; or if it should not, the returning wants and necessities of men will daily engage them in cares and business troublesome enough; so that it is a foolish thing for us to overcharge our present hours (sufficiently burdened already) with

\*. Psal xlv. 11.

the fears and fancies of the time to come; of wants which we may never suffer, of sorrows and disappointments which we may never meet with, and provision for age we may never live to, or for children that may never live to enjoy it. We are exposed to unavoidable trouble enough every day; let us endeavour to bear that, when it shall happen, as becomes us; but let us not be so absurdly greedy of vexation, as to anticipate troubles, which are yet at a distance, and are at most but possibilities.

THESE are the arguments our Saviour has thought fit to use, the reasons he has given, why we should not lay up treasures upon earth. Thus far he has condescended to *persuade* us. But if we will not be *convinced* by him, we must nevertheless be *judg'd* by him: and whatever our worldly notions are of policy and prudence, that man will then appear the wisest, and shall prove the happiest, who has in this life bent his thoughts most seriously to another; despising riches, and committing himself, and all that belongs to him, to the good providence of God by faith, dispersing cheerfully to the poor, and labouring only to lay up treasures in heaven, which can never perish.





## CHAP. XX.

### Of CENSURE and of REPROOF.

MATTH. vii. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.

*Judge not, that ye be not judged.*

*For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.*

*And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?*

*Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye, and behold a beam is in thine own eye?*

*Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.*

*Give not that which is holy unto dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rent you.*

OUR



OUR Saviour's design in this paragraph, is the same with most of the foregoing, to correct the *Jewish* misinterpretations of the moral law. They found there a command to *\*rebuke their brethren, and not to suffer sin upon them*. From hence that proud, ill-natur'd people took the liberty of censuring one another with the utmost rigour; hoping by their affected strictness in condemning what was ill in others, the better to conceal their own vices. Thus we meet with a Pharisee censuring his neighbour, even in his prayers to God, † *God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican*. This and some other mistakes in the duty of reproof, our Saviour here endeavours to rectify, as though he should say,

“ BE not rash and severe in your censures. Do  
 “ not readily give ear to every malicious story, nor  
 “ be apt your selves to surmise the worst of other  
 “ people's actions, lest ye provoke both God and man,  
 “ to use you in proportion as ye have done your  
 “ neighbour: For ye must expect from the justice  
 “ of God to be judged with the like candor or  
 “ rigour ye have shewn to others; and such is the  
 “ common method of proceeding amongst men,  
 “ that whosoever gives no quarter, must expect  
 “ none. But especially it is unreasonable for those,  
 “ who are guilty of gross and scandalous sins, (which  
 “ often is the case) demurely to correct, reprove,  
 “ and exclaim against others for faults of little  
 “ concern, and hardly worth the notice: He who  
 “ would reform another, must begin with himself,  
 “ that it may appear he reproveth not out of a cen-  
 “ sorious humour, but from a real aversion to every

\* Lev. xix. 17.

† Luke xviii. 11.

“ thing that is evil, and a real charity to the offender, and that he may set about it with discretion, and perform it with a decent authority. Nor is reproof always proper, we must distinguish between such persons as *are*, and such as *are not likely to be amended by it*. Some men are so incorrigible, that it would be cast away upon them, like holy things thrown to dogs, and pearls to swine. Nay, perhaps they may rather be made worse than better by it, not only despising but abusing both your advice and your charity. And in this case you will only expose your self, instead of reforming them.

IN explaining of this paragraph, a little farther, let us consider more distinctly,

- I. WHAT sort of judging is here forbidden us?
- II. THE necessity of amending our own lives, in order to the reforming of others.
- III. THE meaning of this advice, of not attempting reproof where it is not likely to have a good effect.

I. *WHAT sort of judging is here forbidden us:* Were not reproof a duty incumbent upon every private Christian, as occasion requires, I should not take these words to be a prohibition of *rash* and *severe censuring* only, but of meddling *at all* with other mens matters; and indeed when we do censure men, tho' never so justly, without designing them or religion any service by it, but only the gratifying our own malicious temper, we certainly offend against this precept. But beside the necessity of a good intention, as the ground or only reasonable pretence of all censuring of others, we must take care that our censures be not rash and severe, for such they are, if we either,

(1.) *GIVE credit to every thing that can be said ill of a man.* There is not that story which can be invented to the disreputation of another, though never so groundless and improbable, (nay, I may say almost impossible) but some will greedily receive and swallow it. 'Tis an ill-natur'd easiness of belief these people are guilty of: The case is otherwise, when any thing is told (whether false or true) to the advantage of a man: For then how difficult is the credit, how lazily does it circulate? But these same persons, who are cautious enough of being imposed upon by a lie in *other* matters, as thinking it a reflection upon their judgments, hardly ever question the truth of a *defamation*; and look upon it as a sufficient excuse, not only for believing, but reporting the most egregious falsehoods of this kind, that indeed *they heard so*. They may deceive themselves and others, with a pretended detestation of the offence, and concern for the offender, but it really proceeds from a pride of raising their own reputation, by the ruin of another's. . And this vanity is an encouragement to envious and malicious people, to invent lies of their neighbours, because they know that most men are very ready to believe and hearken to such stories. This is certainly one instance of rash judging. Another is,

(2.) *WHEN we judge men to be wicked, because they are unfortunate,* because it has pleas'd God to afflict them with some calamity. This was the error of *Job's* friends, from which that upright man endeavours to free them, by shewing them to be to blame in condemning a man's innocency by his afflictions. And if it was a great crime in them at that time, it is much worse now a-days in Christians, yet is there no practice more common. Some are so given to this kind of censure, that they cannot hear of any, the least loss, befallen a neighbour, but they presently suspect the person guilty  
of

of some crime, for which they tell you this is a judgment of God upon him. But St. *Paul* tells us, that \**whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.* The revelation of a future judgment, and of rewards and punishments in another life, makes this barbarous custom, of adding to peoples afflictions, very unreasonable, and an instance of rash judging. Another is,

(3.) WHEN we make the *worst* of every thing, which is *really sinful* in mens actions, or believe an offender to be worse than he really is, when we condemn him as for an *habit* only for a *single act* of sin: For certainly tho' one *profane oath* discharged in passion, or however else, and the being *once drunk*, is sin, and calls for a deep repentance before God; yet is not a man for one, or perhaps two or three acts of these, committed in his whole life, to be esteemed a *common swearer*, or *drunkard*. If these offences be against the general course and bent of his life, 'tis very uncharitable to rank him here-upon amongst scandalous and habitual sinners. In like manner, when we magnify a fault above its true nature and degree, when we affect to blacken any wicked act, with more aggravations than can be fairly gathered from the circumstances of it: Or when, because a man lives in the practice of some vices, we presume him guilty of every ill thing our uncharitable suspicion may suggest against him: Or when, because a man *has been* notoriously bad, we conclude him *always* so, and are unwilling to suppose he either *has* repented, or *will* or *may* repent. And as reducible to this head, when we pretend to judge of the eternal state and condition of persons deceased, without any good assurance, which 'tis very hard, and in most cases impossible

\* Heb. xii. 6.



for us to have, that they did not truly repent before death, and are not received to mercy. In all these instances we are guilty of rash judging. And so we are,

(4.) WHEN we censure and condemn *as evil*, an action that is really in its own nature *indifferent*, and may be either good or bad, as circumstances (probably unknown, or at least not consider'd by us) may determine it. It may perhaps be somewhat that *borders* too near upon evil, or is *easily abused* to evil; but is not evil in the nature of the thing, and therefore capable of two interpretations. To instance only in *keeping company, gaming, dressing, dancing* (and there are many others of this kind) which *may be* innocent diversions; or they may be crimes, according as they are used to good, or abused to ill purposes, the regularity, or the misbehaviour in them, or according to the time we spend upon them.

To judge favourably of these, when circumstances and effects do make them criminal, is indeed to encourage vanity and vice: But on the other hand, to censure them as evil, tho' such effects and circumstances do not appear to render them so, is rash and severe judging, moroseness and ill nature, not religion. Or,

(5.) WHEN we suspect a *good* action of *hypocrisy*. By good actions, I here mean not only such as are *materially* good; as the practice of family prayer, frequenting the Church, receiving the sacrament, giving liberally to the poor; and, in a word, all works of piety, charity, justice, and temperance; but these works attended also with such circumstances, that to a candid and unprejudic'd judgment, they appear *formally* and *really* good; and this, or the other man whom we would censure, seems to do them from an *inward principle of conscience* and *sincerity*; nothing appearing to the contrary either  
in

in his performance of these, or in his general character and course of life. For tho' tis possible, a man may do any of these things hypocritically, yet if he be not evidently guilty of some indulged, habitual vice, that is inconsistent with sincere religion, or of something peculiarly inconsistent with the goodness of that action we pretend to judge of, we ought in charity to presume the best of him; and that what he does, is not from any secret, corrupt, and wicked principle; but from an honest mind, and consequently his action is good; and if we judge otherwise of him and it, we judge *rashly*. Nothing is more hard to pry into, or pronounce upon, than the sincerity of men's hearts, in the discharge of their duty; for we can only hear their *words*, and see their *actions*, without a possibility of looking farther into their thoughts, to discover the spring or principle that moves them. *The heart may be deceitful indeed, and desperately wicked; but who can know it?* God has told us by the Prophet *Jeremy*, \* *I, the Lord, search the heart, I try the reins, even to give to every man, according to his ways.* And *Solomon* acknowledges, that God alone can do this, † *For thou, even thou only knowest the hearts of all the children of men.* What insolence is it then for us to pretend to that, which God alone can do, as well as *impertinence* to judge of what we cannot know, and *uncharitableness* to judge hardly, of what we have no apparent reason to censure! Yet nothing is more common, than this censorious and unchristian practice, of condemning good actions for hypocrisy, especially, where there is a secret spleen to the person that does them.

THESE five instances I think include all, that is meant here by rash and severe judging. Let us

\* Jer. xvii. 9, 10.

† 1 Kings viii. 39.

proceed now to the second general head, to consider,

II. *THE necessity of amending our own lives, in order to the reforming of others.* This our Saviour directs as a remedy against censoriousness, and were it but effectually put in practice, it would be a certain cure: For we may observe, that, generally speaking, the *worst* men are the most uncharitable this way. Notorious bad men do it in hopes, that by representing the virtues of good men, to be only grimace and hypocrisy at the bottom, their own wickedness may come off with the better credit; as it may seem impossible to be really good, and themselves the more generous sinners of the two, because they don't so much as *pretend* to virtue. Proud men, who desire to be thought better than the rest of the world, do it as an *easier way* to gain a reputation, than by a solid and extraordinary goodness; while all the pretence is, the reformation of those whom they censure; but whoever truly designs *that*, must begin at home, and resolve to set an example of true goodness in his own character. To be sure, he must not be guilty of as great, or greater sins, than those which he reproves, for it is, (1.) *Ridiculous in it self*, for such a man to reprove. Every body he attacks has a retortion ready for him, and his own conscience will sharpen the sting of it, and the world will laugh at him. For him that has a beam in his own eye, to find fault with a mote in his brother's, is such a visible affectation, such an overt-act of hypocrisy, that it looks awkward and monstrous. (2.) The reproofs or censures of such a man, instead of reforming, will really *harden* the sinner. There is a spirit of contradiction in human nature, which strongly inclines and tempts men to grow worse, rather than to amend, when upon the comparison they find themselves

themselves still better men (notwithstanding all their faults) than him who undertakes to correct them. They plainly see, that he does it not from any sense of virtue, or real opinion of the enormity of sin, but to give himself an air of demureness, and to fix a brand of reproach upon them. So that such reproofs entirely lose their effect. And in truth, on the other hand, a man that is given to reproof, had need not only to be free from gross and scandalous offences himself, but to be eminent and exemplary in religion; nor only exemplary in a great degree of that particular virtue, the contrary to which he sets himself to correct in others, but to be well versed in *all manner of goodness*, and governed by a thoroughly christian spirit. Because whoever undertakes this duty of reproofing and reforming, can expect no success, if he do not manage it with *judgment*, meekness and charity, and all these he must be supplied with by religion. (1.) It is to be managed with *good judgment*. Every sin deserves not the same measures of reproof: Nor is a person ever reclaim'd from any sin by a reproof improper for it; because it appears in this case, that the reprover is mistaken, and therefore a very improper guide. But now a knowledge of what difference must be made in all our reproofs and admonitions, according to the difference of the sins reprov'd, is attainable no other way than by a perfect *knowledge of our religion*, that we may know what is commanded or forbidden; and in a *constant practice of all the duties and virtues it requires*, that we may know to what degrees they are practicable in this state of infirmity, what may be effected by the assistance of God's holy Spirit, and what grains of allowance must be made for the weakness of human nature; all which will best be learn'd by experience in the course of our own christian warfare, and the observations we make upon our selves.

(2.) Reproof is to be given with *meekness*; for a passionate, morose, or reproachful way of giving it, will sooner exasperate than reform. And how shall we attain to such a spirit of meekness as is necessary in this case, but by the effectual influence of religion upon our minds, and a long practised habit thereof, under the conduct of God's holy Spirit, and our own endeavours. (3.) It is to be done with *christian love and charity*: For though the rebukes of an enemy out of ill-will to reproach and defame, may notwithstanding help and reform a wise man; yet the generality of mankind are not to be reclaim'd, but by admonitions that sensibly proceed from love; they must be convinced, that what we say is really out of kindness to them, before it will have any good effect or influence upon them, to amend their lives. Now charity is an high attainment; St. Paul tells us, that \* *Love is the fulfilling of the law*; so that if none but a charitable man can effectually perform this duty, the necessity of making great advances towards religious perfection in our own lives, in order to the qualifying us for the reforming of others, is very evident. But I shall now hasten to the third and last particular to be considered.

III. THE meaning of this advice, of *not attempting reproof, where it is not likely to have a good effect*. Our Saviour here forbids to put the Gospel under contempt, or our own persons into danger, by reproving unreasonable and brutish men, such as will either despise and ridicule the reproof we give, or hate us for it, and perhaps assault and put us in danger of our lives thereupon: Only here we must take care, that we do not impose upon our selves with deceitful excuses; and in truth this care ought to be so much the greater, because we are apt to

\* Rom. xiii. 10.

be very negligent and backward to this duty of reproof, looking upon it as an irksome and unpleasing thing to tell men of their faults, unpleasing both to our selves and them. Yet is it not better for both to undergo a little trouble in this kind, than perish eternally together; one for continuing in his sin, and the other for not reproofing him? We are likewise apt to excuse our selves, by confounding censure and reproof; we would not be thought to be proud, uncharitable and censorious persons. But is there not a wide difference between pharisaical censure, and the reproofs of christian charity? With such excuses however men often deceive themselves, and neglect their duty; throwing the blame upon the obstinacy of the sinner, while all the fault is in their own remissness. But if there be really no ground for hope; if the person appear to be incorrigible; if he hath frequently rejected our admonitions before, or the reproofs of wiser men; if he be a despiser of all religion; if he be one, who is so far from being likely to be reclaim'd by our reproof, as that he shall laugh at it, or clamour upon us, or affront us for it; we are so far from being required to spend our admonitions upon him, that we are here forbidden so to do.





## C H A P. XXI,

*Of Importunity in Prayer, and of doing  
as we would be done by.*

MATT. VII. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12.

*Ask, and it shall be given you: Seek, and ye  
shall find: Knock, and it shall be opened  
unto you.*

*For every one that asketh, receiveth: And he  
that seeketh, findeth: And to him that knock-  
eth, it shall be opened.*

*Or what man is there of you, whom if his  
son ask bread, will he give him a stone?*

*Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a ser-  
pent?*

*If ye then being evil, know how to give good  
gifts unto your children, how much more  
shall your Father which is in heaven, give  
good things to them that ask him?*

*Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that  
men should do to you, do ye even so to them:  
For this is the law and the Prophets.*

IN



IN a former paragraph our Saviour gave us some directions how to pray, cautioned us against ostentation and vain repetitions in our prayers, and prescribed us a most excellent form, in which we may address our selves to God. Here his design is to press us to a  *fervent and continual*  exercise of prayer, not only as a duty, but as a necessary and successful means of obtaining at the hands of God, all blessings which we stand in need of, temporal and eternal. And from God's dealing thus with us, like a tender Father readily answering our requests of all things needful for us, our Saviour takes occasion to recommend the like affectionate readiness amongst our selves, to all good offices one towards another, doing freely for  *others* , what we our selves would think it reasonable they should in like cases do for  *us* . As if he had said,

“ WHATSOEVER ye have need of, apply your  
 “ selves to God for it by importunate prayer, and  
 “ he will surely answer your petitions, either  *in*   
 “  *kind* , the very thing ye desire, or at least,  *in*   
 “  *quality* , something which he knows to be really  
 “ fitter for you, and that will be more to your ad-  
 “ vantage. 'Tis fit that ye should own his power and  
 “ providence, by such an application; and those  
 “ who do, shall taste of his abundant goodness.  
 “ But if ye will not, ye may thank your selves  
 “ for his with-holding the blessing from you. Or  
 “ if ye ask and have not, 'tis because ye ask amiss.  
 “ A faint and seldom request is only begging a de-  
 “ nial; the Majesty of heaven expects to be wait-  
 “ ed on with frequent, earnest, and humble peti-  
 “ tions; an unwearied and repeated diligence; and  
 “ if ye thus solicit him, he will not deny you;  
 “ for he has the affection and tenderness of a Father  
 “ towards you. And what earthly parent is there,  
 “ who,



“ who, if his son ask of him any thing necessary  
 “ for life, will mock at the request, by giving him  
 “ an useles or an hurtful thing? If then, men,  
 “ who are sinful creatures, passionate, weak and  
 “ humourfome, have yet the tenderness to give  
 “ their children what is good and fit for them;  
 “ how much more shall the infinite goodness of  
 “ God, whose children ye are, do so to those who  
 “ importunately pray to him for it? Now as this  
 “ loving-kindness of God is an encouragement to  
 “ prayer, so it yields a direction for your conduct  
 “ towards your neighbour. Since God shews him-  
 “ self a compassionate Father to mankind, in be-  
 “ stowing whatever they request, that is really fit  
 “ for them to have, ye ought to treat one another  
 “ as brethren, and do for others, whatever ye  
 “ could reasonably expect they should do for you,  
 “ were ye in their condition, and they in yours:  
 “ For this is the sum and substance of your duty,  
 “ with regard to men, and of all that the law and  
 “ the Prophets have said upon it.

In this paragraph there are two distinct parts worthy of our farther consideration.

- I. WHAT qualifications are requisite to make our prayers prevailing; or what is included in the notion of importunate prayer.
- II. WHAT is the nature and extent of this rule, of doing as we would be done by, which is here called the law and the Prophets.

I. I shall begin with the first, the *qualifications* necessary to make our prayers *prevailing*, or what is meant by *importunity* in prayer. Whatever view we take of our condition, whether with regard to soul or body, we find our selves in such a state of continual dependance upon God, (the exigencies of human life so many, our own inability to provide

vide for them, so sensible and apparent) that one would think even the worst of men should not need to be *excited* and *persuaded* to prayer; yet it seems the best of men do need not only *persuasion*, but *encouragement* to this duty. The reason is, because though they know their wants, and that God, and he alone, is *able* to supply them, they are conscious of so much sin in themselves, that naturally (and without a mediator) they have reason to fear, he *will not* hear them. *Christ* therefore, our great and only Mediator, as in other places he assures us of his intercession, does here excite and encourage us to apply unto God, with assurances that if we do, *we shall be heard*. But then 'tis expected our prayers should be *importunate*, that we may shew the deep sense we have of our own wants, our real desire that God would hear us, and our steady expectation that he will. In order to be accepted then, we are to pray with *earnestness*, and with *continuance* or *perseverance*, both which are included in *importunity*.

*FIRST* then, We must pray with earnestness. And this consists chiefly in these two things, attention and affection.

(1.) *IN attention*. When we present our selves before the infinite Majesty of heaven and earth, to offer up our praises and petitions to him, what an insolence is it to trifle in that awful presence; to have our eyes gazing about on every object that may divert them; our thoughts as little interested in what we say, as if we were repeating only an idle charm? It is not enough surely to hurry over a form of words in prayer, our minds must consider and attend to every sentence, with a close and serious application. Divine worship is the exercise of many graces, the exercise of faith and hope, humility and love: And how can we exercise these when our minds are unconcerned? For these graces  
are

are seated in the soul, which is only able to recollect and consider. *God is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit*, with the inward attention of the minds, as well as the outward posture of their bodies, and motion of their lips. This therefore, being so necessary a qualification of prayer, yet such withal, as even the best disposed minds find it hard enough to secure, it has been thought very proper and good advice, that before we go to prayer, we should employ a few minutes in preparation for that duty, to recollect, compose and fix our thoughts, and place them upon the right object, and restrain them to it, because variety of business, and objects, and circumstances, are very apt to fill our heads with a confused train of imaginations, which impertinently distract, and through the infirmity of human nature, are not easily withstood by us. This certainly requires care and diligence in the *best of men* ; but let the difficulty of attention to such as these, be no excuse for the profane and careless. There is a great deal of difference betwixt the distractions in prayer, which good men *cannot* avoid, and those which bad men do not so much as *strive against*, or *endeavour to avoid*. The former are properly failings and sins of infirmity, and will be pardoned by a merciful God, as such, because they are *involuntary* ; but the carelessness of an irreligious mind that *freely gives into* distractions and vain thoughts at such a Time, and allows the Eye to gaze about at random, and (which is too often the case) when, instead of joining in the prayers and praises of the congregation, people are reading letters, talking over news, whispering remarks upon others, laughing, and giving themselves airs, or the like. This, I say, is a gross piece of profaneness, 'tis no infirmity, but a wilful sin, a contempt of the presence of God, and a solemn ridicule of all religion. But,

(2.) SIN-

(2.) SINCERITY or earnestness consists also in the  *fervent exercise of the affections*: So St. Paul requires that we should be *\* fervent in spirit, serving the Lord*. And Solomon in the name of God speaks thus, *† My son, give me thine heart*. It is the HEART which God especially requires in all the services of religion, and particularly in the offices of devotion: for without this our prayers are but as a *sounding brass* and as a *tinkling cymbal*; not only not acceptable, but grating and provoking to the great God, to whom we speak. We are not only to know and mind what we say in prayer, but our *sincere desires* are to go along with every petition, an *affectionate thankfulness* with every clause of our praises, and a *devout reverence*, and *impressions suitable to what is said*, with every acknowledgment of the awful attributes of God therein. It is a mocking of God to pray for what we do not desire, and to give thanks for such things of which we have no consideration or esteem. God being the great judge and discerner of spirits, knows with what temper and inclination we come to him; and how can we expect he should bestow that upon us, which he knows we care not whether he does or no, many times what we had rather be without? As for instance, we pray that God would *not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil*. Who can ever imagine any man to be in earnest in this request, that knowingly and needlessly runs *himself* into temptation every day; and though made conscious of his own weakness by repeated falls, will still be challenging, and wrestling still with an antagonist whom he has found too strong for him? He knows the *Siren* that has often charm'd him to his ruin, he owns his folly, pretends to repent of it, and change his measures; but

\* Rom. xii. 11.

† Prov. xxiii. 26.

'tis a vain pretence, while (with *Solomon's* young man void of understanding) he daily goes the way to her house, and still frequents her company. The love of wine, or the influence and example of his debauched companions, have betray'd him frequently to intemperance; he confesses it, and resolves to grow sober and abstemious; yet runs into the same society as often as he can have it, and one glass leads him on to another, till his appetite has again overpower'd his reason and his virtue. Does such a man indeed desire that God would keep him from sin, when he so apparently delights in the temptation? Or that God would preserve him from temptation, when he himself wantonly plays with it, nay, even seeks it out, and tempts the tempter? If therefore the grace of God does not (according to the letter of his prayer) preserve him from temptation, and deliver him from evil, it is not that *God refuses to hear him*, or *denies his request*; but because his affection not going along with the words, he does not *really desire* this, and consequently it is not his *request*, he does not *pray* for it; and though he may say the Lord's-Prayer twenty times in a day, he may *thank himself*, if nevertheless he falls into grievous sins, and is overcome by many temptations: For his *heart*, as well as his *voice*, must join, or God will not regard him. Did we but impartially examine into the state of our affections, and compare our prayers and our conduct together, 'tis to be fear'd much of the like sincerity would appear in other instances, which I have not time to mention. But surely at the very moment we are putting up petitions to God, one transient thought upon each of them before we utter them, will tell us whether we are in earnest or no. 'Tis easy to think with my self, whether I do indeed desire this thing which I am about to ask: If I find I do not, 'tis in vain to ask it; and if I do, my affections may  
be

be said to go along with my petition. This method I would seriously recommend, that our prayers may be a deliberate act of the *heart*, and of the *judgment*, as well as of the *tongue*. And by what I have insisted on, it will appear, that by the affections, I do not mean that forced fervency, which is rather a straining and working up of the passions; nor that mere warmth of imagination and fancy, on which some people lay the stress of all devotion, but a *regular, solid, rational, and sincere desire* of what we pray for, which may take place in the mind without extravagant raptures, and affected tones and postures. Thus much for that sincerity or earnestness, which is one branch of importunity in prayer.

THE *second* thing imply'd in importunity in prayer, is *continuance*, or *perseverance*. To this St. Paul excites the *Thessalonians*; \* *Pray without ceasing, in every thing give thanks; for this is the will of God concerning you.* And the *Philippians* also; † *Be careful for nothing, but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.* And the same Apostle describing to the *Ephesians* the christian armour, with which he would have them always guarded and in readiness, adds in the close, as a material part of it, ‡ *Praying always, with all prayer and supplication, and watching thereunto with all perseverance.* And our Saviour here implies the same thing, by the repetition of his command, so often, in a variety of words, *Ask, seek, knock*; that is, pray frequently, or continue praying, with an unwearied diligence. Now let us see what is included in the perseverance, to which these and many other places of Scripture press us.

\* 1 Thess. v. 17.

† Phil. v. 17.

‡ Eph. vi. 13.

(1.) It imports an *habitual disposition* to pray, and this implies an inwrought habit of fearing, loving, and honouring God: For as the nature of prayer is described, in general, to be an intercourse or conversation of the soul with God, that intercourse can never be carry'd on without honourable and worthy thoughts of God; and he that has that sense of God *truly*, will have it *habitually*; and he that has it *habitually*, will exert it *frequently*. Such a soul will ascend to God upon all occasions; and by often returns and emotions; and this sense of the duty reconciles those expressions in Holy Scripture, of *praying always*, and *continuing instant in prayer*, not only to a possibility, but to easiness and familiarity: For the soul of a man is quick and agil, it can enter the courts of heaven abstractedly, and offer a thousand petitions, while the body is but dressing and preparing for the temple; and there is no honest affair in the world, how laborious and troublesome soever, that can hinder this spiritual commerce.

(2.) PERSEVERANCE in prayer, implies likewise a fervency of more set and solemn applications to God, at all proper opportunities, and on all occasions; we either want or receive something at his hands continually, our souls and bodies, our estates and employments, our families and relations, the state of the Church, or that of the public, afford us matter enough every day we live, to apply ourselves to God by supplications, or by praises. Morning and evening is the least we can think our selves obliged to. \* *It is a good thing, says holy David, to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O thou most High, to shew forth thy loving kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night.* Even the times of our eating, the re-

\* Psal. xcil. 1, 2.

turns of our stated meals, require us to pray for a blessing on the food he gives us, and to praise him for it, according to the \* example of our blessed Lord himself, who always did so, when he sat down to eat. And besides these fix'd and constant occasions, the accidents we see, and the accidents we hear of; our sickness, our health, our encrease, or our losses, our spiritual state, our conversation, and our business, and our recreation; these all call upon us to call upon God very frequently, either to deprecate his displeasure, or to beg his assistance; to implore his grace, or to own his providence, and to praise his goodness, and he that does this may be said to pray continually. Thus far a man may proceed privately; but because prayer is likewise a public act of religion, and that God requires we should honour him before men, and in the face of the world, therefore are we obliged,

(3.) To neglect as few opportunities as is possible, of *assembling our selves publicly* to worship God with united souls, and combined and conjugated affections, assisting and enflaming one another. The Church has appointed a *daily* service for the worship of God in public, which has been practised from the very first beginning of the christian religion, by the Apostles themselves, and the primitive Christians. The *Jews* had stated hours of daily prayers, and the Apostles and first believers resorted to the temple at those hours; so it is said of St. *Peter* and St. *John*, that they went up into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour. And there is nothing more manifest in the writings of the antient Christians, than that they observed stated times of public worship daily and nightly too: for during the ages of per-

\* Mat. xiv. 9. Mat. xv. 36. Luke xxiv. 30.



secution they were forced to assemble in the night, and in the following ages, when persecution ceased, and so the occasion of those nightly assemblies ceased likewise; yet in some places, especially when a monastical life came to be esteem'd, they continued still these nocturnal offices. But the Church of *England* at the reformation observed a most excellent decorum in this matter, requiring only the *morning* and *evening* service in her Liturgy; and these neither at any definite hours, leaving that to the wisdom of governours, and the convenience of places, and the attending of *this* service (as well as the private exercise of devotion) where the necessary business of human life will admit, may very well be look'd upon, as included in that acceptable frequency which importunity and perseverance do imply.

(4.) PERSEVERANCE in prayer implies *unweary'd* and *undiscouraged countenance in begging some particular mercy*, tho' God seems not to regard us, nor does, in any thing at present, look as if he would ever answer us in that matter. That such an importunity is an act of faith which God is well pleased with, and how long soever he may keep us in the exercise of it, by seeming to take no notice of our request, will certainly at length give a gracious answer to, is several times inculcated by our Saviour; as in that parable of the unjust judge, and the importunate widow, the moral of which is expressly declared to be, that \* *Men ought always to pray, and not to faint*; and in that other of the householder raised at midnight by the *importunity* of his friend, though other considerations would not prevail to supply him with what he wanted. And that this is that very perseverance more immediately encouraged by our Saviour here, appears, in that

\* Luke xviii. 1, 2.

he makes the application of the last mentioned parable, in the same words with his exhortation here, † *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.* The like encouragement he gives also in his conduct to the woman of *Canaan*, who follow'd him with repeated solicitations to heal her daughter, and tho' sharply answered and repuls'd, would take no denial; whereupon, as if he were overcome at length by her resolute perseverance, he answered her, ‡ *O woman, great is thy faith: Be it unto thee even as thou wilt.* Such perseverance therefore is an act of faith, most highly acceptable to God; when tho' all circumstances look dark about us, and we have long and earnestly prayed, yet seem to have hitherto prayed in vain; and have no prospect of being answered still, and every thing carries an appearance, that we shall never gain our point; we nevertheless hold on praying, continue our earnest requests, and wait submissively the will of God concerning us. Hoping even against hope, and with pious *Job*, resolving, \* *Tho' he slay me, yet will I trust in him.* We are not to suppose, that God's requiring or expecting this *importunity*, is a mere point of *majesty*. Tho' if it were, 'tis surely reasonable; and the most exalted creature in the universe could not think much to wait upon the sovereign and infinite Majesty of God with its requests, how longsoever it might be before he would vouchsafe an answer: Nor are we to imagine, that by repeated solicitations we may tire him out, and so change his mind, and oblige him to grant us what he had no intention at first to yield to: For that were a weakness, of which the unchangeable wisdom of God is incapable. But he requires and expects it, because he would *exercise our faith in him*,

† Luke xi. 9.

‡ Mat. xv. 28.

\* Job xiii. 15.

and try us, whether we can firmly adhere to, and depend upon him under such discouraging delays and seeming disregard of us; and this too, † *for our own sakes*; that our virtue being the brighter by such an exercise, may be the more gloriously rewarded, and the blessing we have so long desired, may be the more acceptable to us, and more thankfully received by us, when it comes. For we pray, and persevere in praying; the mercy we pray for (provided it be really a mercy, and will do us good) will surely come at last: If we *thus ask*, it shall be *given us*; thus *seek*, we shall *find*; thus *knock*, it shall be *opened* to us. But then we must consider the matter of our petitions, *what it is we ask for*; if it be riches, or long life, or grandeur and honour in this world, to be *importunate* in begging these, is to be *impudent*; God has no where *promised them*; nay, he has *forbid* us to *set our hearts upon them*; and therefore such an importunity about them, is not only vain and trifling, but displeasing to him. For a sickly man to be importunate in begging health; a man under the pressures of poverty, such supplies as are necessary for him, or a change of his condition for a better; a man in danger, or in any affliction begging for deliverance; or engaged in any lawful undertaking of moment, imploring success, and a blessing on his endeavours: In these and the like cases, I say, 'tis *lawful* to be importunate, because God has encouraged us to ask; but then the concern being only temporal, and the glory of God, and our own real good being, for ought we know, more to be served by denying, than by answering our request, the importunity here must be always accompany'd with an humble and entire submission to God's will and wisdom. This our Saviour's example teaches us; who tho' he prayed thrice, and

† 1 Pet. i. 7.

very earnestly in the garden, that he might not suffer, still corrected his desires with, *nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done.* But when we pray for spiritual blessings, for pardon of sin, and for the grace of God, importunity has its full scope; it is not only lawful, but a *virtue* here; and we may sollicite absolutely for them, and must never cease till we obtain them. Thus I have gone through the first part of the paragraph, I come now to the second.

II. THE great rule of *doing as we would be done by*, than which nothing is a more equitable, or a more easy guide for our behaviour in the offices of society, or civil life, towards all with whom we have to do. The equity of it is so visible, that it needs no proof; the universal reason of mankind agrees to it in the theory, though their appetites and passions hurry them beside the practice. Nay, so fond of it was that brave and virtuous *Roman Emperor Alex. Severus*, tho' an *Heathen*, that giving it the negative turn, he caused it be wrote in letters of gold over the gates of his palace, and in other public places; *Quod tibi fieri non vis, alteri ne feceris*; *What you would not have others do to YOU, do not you to OTHERS.* And the easiness of this rule, is as great as the equity of it: For 'tis a guide which every man carries in his own breast, whereby he can readily determine, without recurring to large volumes of laws, or systems of morality, or courts of judicature, what is just and fit for him to do with respect to another; he needs but turn the tables, and suppose his *neighbour's case* to be his own, and *his* his neighbour's, and then he has his direction at hand; what usage he should give, by considering what usage he would expect. We are commanded to *love our neighbour as our selves*; but our partiality in this,

and the difference we are apt to make, in the way of love and esteem, betwixt our selves and others, is the cause of all injustice. Now this selfishness, is what the precept here of *doing as we would be done by*, is designed to correct. And the rule is so true and exact in it self, that were it not for the corruption of human nature, which triumphs in nothing more than in perverting and debauching that which should reform it, one might pronounce it to hold good in all cases without bounds or limitations; but because the very best things are liable to abuse, and the wisest maxims may be stretch'd beyond the design and reason of them, it will be necessary so to restrain our present rule, that it may not lead us beyond what is *lawful* or *reasonable* to be done.

(1.) WE must confine it to things that are *lawful*, or not prohibited by the word of God: For else the Scriptures would be contradictory, if by this rule of *doing as we would be done by*, we are obliged or allow'd to do to others, what by other plain and evident texts we are forbid to do, or to desire. My friend desires me to tell a lie for him to excuse him, or to spread a false story about for his advantage; or though he don't desire it, yet I think it would serve his interest, and what then? Though I my self should be so wicked, or so weak, as to desire the like of another, or be glad of its being done on my account, yet will this rule by no means justify my doing so for any body else, because it is sinful either for me either to tell a lie my self, or to desire another should; in like manner it will be no excuse to a cheating gamester, that he will give the person he games with leave to cheat him if he can; nor to him that endeavours to make his companion *drunk*, that he is very willing to be made as drunk himself; because cheating and drunkenness are sins, and no pretence whatsoever can qualify the guilt. This maxim therefore, of doing as  
we

we would be done by, was never design'd to make men lawless; or such an absolute law to themselves, that whatsoever they can reciprocally desire or submit to, should be lawful. It ought to be *first* known that the thing is lawful, before the rule can be applied; which, strictly speaking, is not so much a law it self as a measure of performing other duties to our neighbour.

(2.) WE must confine it to things that are *reasonable*, or fit to be done. Some things are lawful, which are not expedient: It is lawful for me to give away a good part of my estate, or any particular valuable possession that I have, to whomsoever I think fit; but if a neighbour of mine should come to me, and with a serious face should *desire* me to settle such a Lordship upon him, &c. I dare say all the world would agree, it was a very impudent and unreasonable request; and though he should press me an hundred times over with the rule of *doing as I would be done by* (for it is not to be deny'd that I should gladly receive such a favour and benefaction my self from any other person) he would be as often told, it was a thing *undecent to be ask'd, impertinent to be expected, and unfit to be done*. To instance in another thing not reducible to this rule, no judge or magistrate is obliged thereby to pardon a notorious offender against the laws, upon thinking with himself, that truly was he in the malefactor's place, he would be very desirous to be pardoned. The rule breaks here, because though 'tis natural to an offender to deprecate the punishment due to his offence, *it is not fit or reasonable* the magistrate should hearken to him; for he acts in a public capacity, and must consider the reverence due to the laws, the peace and good order of the public, more than the benefit of any private person. Again, a person who is in very indifferent circumstances, desires me to be bound

with him for a considerable sum, which he is not likely to pay, and if I pay it my self, it will be a great detriment and wrong to my family; I am not by this rule obliged to answer his desire, tho' I should be glad, if the case were my own, as it is his, that another would do the same for me; because it is reasonable I should consider my own family and circumstances in the first place; I am to love my neighbour as my self, but I am not obliged to love him *better*, and to do my self a great injury for the doing him a benefit. Many other instances might be given, but there is no need to enlarge. Religion and prudence must govern us in this, as well as in every other duty. I will therefore take a short and general view of what is indeed the proper application of this rule. Let a child, a subject, or a servant, but ask himself without partiality, what honour, what submission, what obedience he would think was due to him, were he himself a father, magistrate, or master, and his answer to this would be a rule for his own behaviour towards those that are so related to him. The same will hold in all other relative duties; and hereby may be discerned the equity of reverencing superiors, of being civil and courteous to equals, gentle to inferiors, and just and charitable to all mankind. It would keep us from an insolent and surly carriage towards any one, from despising and ridiculing, from upbraiding and provoking, if we do but seriously consider how ill we our selves could bear this from another. It would teach us to forbear and forgive, because we desire in our turns to be forgiven and forgiven. It would make us candid and good-natured, in putting the best interpretation upon the words and actions of others, if we reflect but how reasonable we think it, that another should deal so candidly with us. The poor may be convinced by it, of the unreasonableness of maligning  
and

and envying the rich the advantage of their riches: And these would also see the unreasonableness of refusing relief and assistance to the poor, because each of them would in the others circumstances expect a contrary behaviour. Let but the rich and the poor change places, and then they who before cry'd out of the pride and arrogance of great men, will think it hard to be call'd proud, only for keeping up the necessary port and grandeur of their stations: And they who before condemn'd the laziness of the poor, and thought themselves to have a right of doing wholly what they pleas'd with their own, will then think it hard, when necessitous, not to be pitied, supported, and relieved, by those who are able. A reasonable kindness requir'd by any *one*, will be readily done, when we consider that we our selves stand in need of the kindness of others, and would think it very ill-natured to have a neighbourly office refused us. Those that are now so fond of running up and down from company to company, with scandalous stories, and venomous reflections upon a neighbour, would find a better employment, if they would consider how they would resent it, to be so used and traduced themselves. Let us be exactly just in all our dealings with others, as we would assuredly have *others* just in all their dealings with *us*. These are the chief general instances wherein this rule of *doing as we would be done by* must take place. Particulars are reducible thereto by every man's private conscience, as circumstances arise, to bring them under consideration. I will now only in a few words consider, what is meant by our Saviour, in saying that this rule is the *law and the Prophets*, and then conclude. His meaning, I conceive to be no more than this, " That it is the sum or substance of all that the Prophets have laid down, " with respect to the commandments of the second " table,



“ table, *our duty towards our neighbour*. ’Tis no  
 “ new precept in the sense of it, whatever it may  
 “ be in terms: For the law and the Prophets, in  
 “ all particular directions they have given for our  
 “ conduct one to another, have said thus much al-  
 “ ready *in effect*, and in effect *no more than this*,  
 “ that we *should use others as we would be used*  
 “ *our selves*. But to carry the meaning of it higher,  
 so as to suppose it to comprehend the *whole* duty  
 of a Christian, is an impious pretence to destroy  
 the commandments of the first table. And the pre-  
 tence is as unreasonable as it is impious: For the  
 reason whereupon this rule is grounded, cannot pos-  
 sibly extend it farther than our duty to *mankind*,  
 who though they differ in some circumstances, yet  
 being made of the same materials, coming all from  
 the same stock, and going all to the same place, the  
 grave, they may be said in nature to be *equal*; and  
 this equality is the foundation of the right of re-  
 ciprocal love, and of the which is consequent  
 thereupon, of *doing as we would be done by*. It is  
 enough that we love our neighbour *as our selves*;  
 because he is of the same kind with us, and to love  
 him more, would be as unjust as to love him less  
 than our selves. But God being infinite in all per-  
 fection, we ought to love him infinitely *better* than  
 our selves; there ought to be no measure of our  
 love to *him*, but to love him with all our heart,  
 with all our soul, and with all our strength; there  
 can be no turning of the tables, and therefore no  
 place for this rule betwixt him and us. Since then  
 this rule will carry us no farther than our duty to  
 men, ’tis certainly but one half, and not the whole  
 of what a Christian has to do; for without dispute,  
 he owes a duty to God, as well as to man: And  
 to the one, as well as to the other, is this same ex-  
 pression, *The law and the Prophets*, elsewhere ap-  
 ply’d by our Saviour, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy*  
*God*

*God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind; this is the first and great commandment. The second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self. On these two commandments hang all the law and the Prophets.*



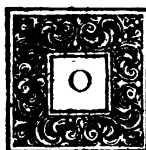
## C H A P. XXII.

*Of the Difficulties of the CHRISTIAN LIFE.*

MATTH. vii. 13, 14.

*Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat.*

*Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*



OUR Saviour having explain'd the precepts of the moral law to a degree of strictness and perfection, far beyond what had been ever taught by the *Jewish* doctors, it was natural to suppose his audience would be startled at it; some perhaps, would think him too severe and rigid in his notions; that surely one might get to heaven without so much ado about it; that it could not be supposed so

so many great scholars as their rabbies were, should be mistaken, and none of them understand the depth and meaning of the law as well as he; and that so many devout and holy men, their *Affideans*, *Pharisees*, and *Essenes*; should be unacceptable to God, and in the wrong way to happiness. Others probably, who were convinced of the justness of his doctrine, might be frightened with the prospect of so many difficult duties, despair of ever living up to so nice a scheme, and reflecting how singular and unfashionable their endeavours towards it must make them look, would rather chuse to go on in that easier way wherein others went, and run the venture with the rest. To both these sorts of men our Saviour seems to apply himself in this paragraph, which, if I may be allowed to give you the sense of it in other words, is as follows.

“ARE ye alarmed at the singularity of my  
 “doctrine, and the severity of the morals I  
 “have laid before you? Be not offended at ei-  
 “ther. ’Tis God that prescribes your duty,  
 “your part is to do it. Whatever others teach,  
 “whatever others practise, assure your selves that  
 “such a religion as will bring you safe to hea-  
 “ven, is a severe and awful thing, and requires  
 “a greater industry and application, than your  
 “doctors have suggested to you. ’Tis hard, but  
 “not impracticable; it may be attain’d to, but it  
 “must be with labour: A strait and difficult path,  
 “and few will go along with you in it; but it  
 “leads to happiness, and ’tis infinitely worth your  
 “while, whatever pains ye take in it. It’s true,  
 “the wise, the learned, the great, the many of  
 “this world, that love to take up with an easy  
 “scheme, which may indulge their senses and their  
 “passions, will beckon you another way, and  
 “count you singular and morose, if you comply  
 “not with them: But truth is not to be deter-  
 “mined

“ mined by the number of those that hold an opinion, nor the way to heaven distinguished by a multitude of examples. Beware therefore, that an implicit confidence in these mislead you not: For the road they take is broad indeed and smooth, and much frequented, but it leads to everlasting misery.

THE gate and way that leads to life, being represented here as so strait and narrow, that few will care to pass through it, or to travel in it; in what sense must we understand that declaration of our Saviour, that *\* his yoke is easy, and his burden light*? As also that of St. John, that his *† commandments are not grievous*? Here is no contradiction, because an affair that has many difficulties and much perplexity in it, may yet be easy, in comparison with another still more laborious; that which is really toilsome in it self, may yet upon some considerations be not only well supported, but delightful; as that which is really easy and agreeable in its own nature, may by circumstances be render'd grievous. To apply this to the present question; Christianity is a scheme of rational and noble precepts, easy in themselves to be performed; but through the corruption of our nature, the force of that original sin which has bent all our faculties to what is evil, and the power of custom, which has strengthen'd it by inveterate habits of sin, religion (being design'd to rectify these distortions) must needs become a painful and severe task to us. Yet difficult as it is, in such unhappy circumstances, a fervent love of God will make it easy and delightful, which is what the Apostle means, when he says, that those *commandments are not grievous*. 'Tis easy, when we consider the strength of divine grace assisting our weakness; 'tis easy, when we are well

\* Matth. xi. 30.

† 1 John v. 3.

accustom-

accustomed to it, however difficult in the first attempts; or at least, whatever difficulties we have to struggle with in our whole christian course, the exceeding and eternal weight of glory, which is the prize we labour for, will smooth the ruggedness of the way, and make us easy in the expectation of that blessed hope; and take the matter how we will, the system of Christianity is, upon the comparison, a far more easy yoke, and a much lighter burden, than the dark, and tedious, and numberless ceremonies of the *Jewish* law, or of the heathen superstition.

BUT in what respects the christian way to heaven, is a difficult and uneasy path, will more fully appear, if we consider,

I. WHAT the way to happiness is.

II. THE many impediments that are apt to divert men out of it, or hinder their making any great progress in it.

I. FIRST, we must enquire *what the way to happiness is*, which may be resolved most suitably to our present purpose in these particulars.

(1.) IT is a way of obedience. (2.) An obedience that must be universal. (3.) That must be constant. And (4.) That must be cordial, or from the heart.

(1.) THE way to heaven lies in *obedience*, viz. to the laws and precepts of the Gospel; and this is the first of those instances which makes the passage strait and troublesome to us. When Christ invites the weary sinner, him who is laden with the weight and burden of his sins, to come to him; and when he invites him to do this in order to his ease and rest; yet even then he tells him, that he must lay a yoke upon him: *Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.. Take my*

*my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.* How easy soever it is made to us by his assistance, yet observe that it is a yoke still; and though it be light, by virtue of the strength and help that he gives to us, yet still *it is*, and is *stiled* a burden, not in respect of the intrinsic nature of his precepts; for he has put no hardships upon us, commanded nothing that is in it self impracticable or burdensome; but merely in regard of the obedience that must be paid to them. For all obedience is grievous to human nature; it supposes a law, and a law infers a restraint, and all restraint is troublesome to them that understand themselves no better than the generality of mankind do, according to the old and common observation, *Nitimur in vetitum; We desire to do that which is forbidden, and that because it is forbidden.* Altho' it be very true, that the holy precepts of our Lord, where they restrain us from doing of any thing, restrain us from our own inconveniences; and where they determine to our duty, determine to our advantage, to do that which is good for us; yet such is our natural desire of liberty, of doing or omitting as we please, that all restraint of this liberty is matter of trouble to us.

(2.) But then, secondly, this will yet farther appear, if we consider, that the way to happiness is *universal* or *general* obedience to *all* Christ's precepts, not only to those that offer less contradiction to our appetites and desires, but even to those, and those especially, which are levelled against the strongest and most prevailing sinful inclinations in us. And thus St. Paul writes to Timothy, \* *Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches.* This charge was to be given to them rather than any

\* 1 Tim. vi. 17.

other, because they were most exposed here, and likeliest to yield to that temptation. The Prophet *Jeremy* suggests the same, † *Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches.* The wise man is not so likely to value himself upon his power or riches; nor the man of power upon his wealth or wisdom; nor yet the rich man upon his sagacity or might: He applies the precept therefore to such instances, as it is most natural for a man so qualified to place his confidence in; against this he must especially keep upon his guard, as the vanity or sin that does most easily beset him. And this is one thing that much straitens the gate to heaven; for men would willingly in some respects, and in some instances, deny themselves for a future reward; but they would not do it in those instances wherein they are most of all concerned. ‡ *Good Master*, says the young man in the Gospel, *what shall I do that I may have eternal life?* Our Saviour answers, *Keep the Commandments*; and having repeated several of them to him, he tells our Saviour, *All those have I kept from my youth up, what lack I yet?* To this it is answered, *If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come and follow me.* And what did he answer to this command? That follows in the next words, *When he heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.* See here how far a man may go in obedience to those precepts of Christ, where his own particular inclinations are not peculiarly contradicted, and yet make a full stand, when he finds any contradiction in these. Here then lies the straitness or narrowness of the gate which leads to life, that it requires universal

† Jer. ix. 23.

‡ Mat. xix.

obedience in all those very cases and instances, where we are most unwilling to it.

(3.) As this obedience must be universal, so it must be *constant* also, and this still adds to the difficulty. St. Paul having given the *Corinthians* a large description of the glorious state of the blessed in heaven, after their resurrection from the dead, concludes it with these words: *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.* Sometimes mens consciences may be struck with a sudden conviction of the folly and the danger of their ways; sometimes they quarrel with their lusts by reason of that shame and suffering, which they bring upon them; sometimes the temptation is removed, the evil company withdrawn, the tempter hides himself, and then the lust sleeps, and while it sleeps it seems to be dead. But no sooner doth the temptation return, but then the lust awakes, the sinner forgets his convictions, forgets the shame and sufferings his sins had formerly brought upon him, forgets the resolutions he made when he was under that condition; he then violates his intentions, breaks his vows, and returns to the same excess of riot as before. But now the obedience of the Gospel must be stedfast, unmoveable; it must be such as will continue as well when we are, as when we are not under temptation. And this is the third of those particulars, which renders the way and gate to heaven strait and narrow. But likewise,

(4.) THEY that will enter the strait gate of everlasting happiness, must be obedient *from the heart*, or *sincere* in their obedience, which renders it so much the straiter still. Were it enough to put on a specious garb in all our external conversation, only to hide our lusts, and cover the corruption that lurks within us, the craft and policy of this world would teach some men to do their duty; they



would easily learn to smooth the tongue, and oil the lips, and bear the appearance of such persons as Christ requires his disciples to be. But now the precepts of the Gospel reach farther than to the outward man, they require the obedience of the heart; and here indeed lies the greatest part of our obedience; yea, and that which is most difficult to us. 'Tis no such great matter of difficulty to forbear the outward act that is forbidden; but for the proud and haughty man to subdue his inward pride, for a man in affliction to check all inward murmuring, and bear it with a free submission to the will of God; for the sensual man to mortify and subdue his sensual inclinations; for him that naturally loves wealth to abandon his secret veneration and esteem of it; for him that hath received an injury, heartily to lay aside all inward malice, or grudges, as well as actual revenge; this is the gate that leads to heaven and happiness, and this indeed is a strait gate. Men may flatter themselves with vain hopes of getting to heaven some other way; but it is certain there is no other than this, of sincere, constant, universal obedience to all Christ's precepts, can bring them thither; which being in its nature a very strait narrow gate, it is to be fear'd that few men will enter in at it, especially considering there are many impediments in their way; which brings me to my second general enquiry.

II. WHAT the impediments are, which are apt to divert men out of it, or hinder them from making any great progress in it. And they are principally,

(i.) *NATURAL inclination.* Man was indeed at first created upright, with a capacity for, and a prevailing inclination to holiness, though yet with a possibility of sinning; but when *Adam* had sinned away the original perfection of his nature, and by

by one wilful act of disobedience corrupted all his faculties; the bias of his mind was changed, his understanding darkened, his affections debauch'd, his will distorted with a violent bent to that which is evil; and this sad corruption runs in the blood through every creature descended from him. It appears betimes, even in the tender age of infancy, and sticks close to us in all the periods of human life, in youth, in manhood, in old age; and tho' it may by the grace of God be kept in subjection, it is never totally conquered, even in the best of men, till the body return to dust, and the spirit return to God who gave it. Now this is that *earthly* or *natural* man, which savoureth not the things of heaven; nor can at all relish them, without the illuminations and strong impressions of divine grace; and even then, nature is still apt to return upon us, and over-bear what is spiritual. How inclinable are we to all the evils which the Gospel prohibits, and how averse to those duties which the Gospel expressly requires? What abundance of pains must be taken with men, what arguments used, what reasons urged, what inward checks and convictions upon their minds, before they can be induced to offer any violence to this their corrupted nature? And then when the arguments that have been used, the love of happiness, the fear of misery in another world, the sense of God's infinite favour in giving his Son to die for them, have wrought some better inclinations in them; yet how many degrees of their former natural desires and appetites still remain to be subdued? And what a conflict must a man have with himself, what strifes and wars in his own breast, to resist and oppose these appetites? And yet all this must be done, we must mortify and subdue these corrupt desires, and passions, and aversions, before we shall be able to walk in the narrow way, or enter in at the strait gate to heaven.

(2.) A second impediment we have to struggle with, is, the *temptation of the devil*; that subtil, that unwearied solicitor to sin, who from his hatred of God is continually fomenting the rebellion against him; from the malignity of his nature, takes delight in wickedness; and from his envy to mankind, industriously watches all opportunities of enticing us into the *broad way of sin and ruin*; or (if he can't prevail for that) to make our way to heaven as rough and troublesome as he can, by plying us with vile suggestions, by laying secret snares for us, by giving us frequent falls, disquieting our minds, and interrupting our religious course by many arts of molestation. Indeed he is invisible to us, we are not aware of his approaches; but that renders his temptation the more dangerous, he surprises us when we are least provided, he applies himself to that lust which is most potent in us, and at that time when it is most enflamed, and in such manner as is most likely to work with us. He is a spirit, and can insinuate himself into our minds with great advantage; his long experience in mischief has render'd him politic and crafty, and his malice makes him diligent. So that with great reason it is, that St. Peter has cautioned us, \* *Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour; whom resist, stedfast in the faith.* And to the same purpose is that of St. Paul, † *Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world; against spiritual wickedness in high places.* We see then what an enemy we have, who will, if possible, divert us from walking in the narrow way, and entering in at the strait gate.

\* 1 Pet. v. 7, 8.

† Eph. vi. 11.

(3.) A third impediment is, *the many snares that this world lays before us.* The good and evil, the hopes and fears of this present life, divert us out of the way to heaven. The overbearing opinion we have of what is necessary, convenient and beneficial to us here, is apt to work upon us so far, as to make us eagerly to pursue the advantages of this present world, with the neglect of that blessedness which is proposed to us in the life to come. We are apt to consider things imperfectly, so as to give the preference to concerns of less value, but present; before those of greater worth, which are future. The love of this present world, the profits, honours, and pleasures of it, draw men aside from spiritual things, and chain them down to vile affections, alienate them from the laws of God, and introduce them into a thousand frauds and injuries to one another; and the fear of want or poverty, disgrace or danger in this life, betray men to base actions, unworthy arts, and sinful compliances, to avoid them. \* *Demas hath forsaken me,* saith St. Paul, *having loved this present world;* loved the advantages, and fear'd the dangers of *this present life;* having considered things present, and not considered things to come, he hath abandon'd me, and it may be the truth it self, to avoid the dangers which attend me. Now seeing the things of this present life have so strong an influence upon us, seeing we must resist this influence, if we will walk in the strait way, and mortify all desires of worldly things, take up our cross, and follow Christ, if we will be his disciples; it is evident what a mighty difficulty or obstruction this must be to us in our way to heaven.

(4.) ADD hereunto in the fourth place, the *ill examples we have from other men to lead us out of*

\* 2 Tim. iv. 10.

*the right way.* And this our Saviour here particularly cautions us against. Pride and covetousness, lust and intemperance, ambition, malice, and the like, abound in all corners of the world. The serving and indulging of these is the principle by which the generality of men direct and form their own lives, whatever the word of God commands to the contrary. And when the greatest part live at such a rate as this, their example will have a mighty force upon others, to move them to live after the same manner. † *Be not deceived,* says St. Paul; *evil communications corrupt good manners.* And St. Peter gives this warning to the Christians, to whom he wrote, ‡ *Beware lest ye also, being led away by the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.* Imitation is natural unto men, so that we are inclin'd to do like others, and are insensibly led into it: And while in some vices, fashion has almost made them reputable, or at least gives countenance and encouragement to them; in others, men are apt to think they cannot be safe, without doing the same things, and using the same arts, which they see others do and use. Custom either renders truth and virtue singular and ridiculous, or makes them seem dangerous and unsafe. So that men chuse rather to follow a multitude to do evil, than straiten their own measures by the slighted and unfashionable maxims of religion; and they find it very hard to bring themselves to make a better choice; so fatal a temptation is ill example. And upon all these accounts above specified, well might our blessed Saviour affirm, that *wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat*; while at the same time, *strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*

† 1 Cor. xv. 33.

‡ 2 Pet. iii. 14.



## C H A P. XXIII.

### *Of False Teachers.*

MATTH. vii. 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20.

*Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheeps clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves,*

*Ye shall know them by their fruits: Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?*

*Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit: But a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.*

*A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit: Neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.*

*Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire.*

*Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.*



OUR blessed Lord, drawing to the close of his sermon, concludes it in this and the following paragraph, in such a manner as should most effectually enforce the observation of the whole. And first, as a guard or fence to that most necessary practical

scheme of religion, now advanced by him, he warns his Disciples against *false teachers*; who for ends and interest of their own, would directly or indirectly debauch the morals, as well as corrupt the doctrine of the Church. His caution given us here-upon seems to be to this effect.

“ THE duties and virtues I have here taught you,  
 “ are of the last importance to the pleasing of God,  
 “ and to the saving of your own souls; and be-  
 “ cause they are so, the enemy of your salvation  
 “ will labour by all possible means to divert you  
 “ from attending to them. For this purpose he  
 “ will raise up false teachers among you, who with  
 “ plausible shews of zeal and sincerity shall be for  
 “ tracing you out new ways to heaven. Beware  
 “ of them therefore, and assure your selves, that  
 “ whatever commission they pretend from me, if  
 “ they teach any thing contrary to what I have  
 “ taught, or lay the stress of religion any where,  
 “ but where I have laid it, they are doing the  
 “ devil’s work, not mine; and whatever ap-  
 “ pearances they may make of sanctity, or zeal,  
 “ or wisdom, they are building the interests of  
 “ their own vanity or avarice upon your creduli-  
 “ ty, weakness and corruption: Examine the fruits  
 “ of their doctrine, and ye will soon discover them.  
 “ If it tend not to charity, peace, and purity, to  
 “ an inward as well as outward holiness, in all the  
 “ branches of it; according to my Gospel ye may  
 “ as well expect to gather grapes of thorns, or  
 “ figs of thistles, as expect salvation by such a doc-  
 “ trine. If what they teach you were good,  
 “ ’twould lead you to a good life; but if it amuse  
 “ you with other things which serve not to this  
 “ purpose, or lead you contrary thereto; this wis-  
 “ dom is not from above, but is earthly, sensual,  
 “ devilish. The nature of a tree is known by its  
 “ fruit.

“ fruit. And as every tree that brings not forth  
 “ good fruit, how fair soever it appears in leaves  
 “ or blossoms, is good for nothing but the fire: So  
 “ shall that prophet, notwithstanding his seeming  
 “ zeal and fair pretences, have his lot amongst the  
 “ wicked in eternal fire; who does not both by  
 “ his life and doctrine, labour to recommend reli-  
 “ gion in that sincere and genuine practice of it,  
 “ as it is here laid down by me.

IN explaining this paragraph farther, I will shew.

I. WHAT kind of false prophets they are, of whom our Saviour here particularly forewarns us.

II. THE marks or tokens whereby they may be known. I shall begin with the first.

I. *WHAT* kind of false prophets they are, of whom our Saviour here particularly forewarns his Disciples. 'Tis plain by his description of them, *as coming in sheep's clothing*, that they are no profess'd and open enemies to Christianity; but such as under the disguise of owning it, yea, and the pretence of teaching it too, would corrupt the simplicity of it. From the first ages of the Gospel, there have been many erroneous and heretical doctrines scatter'd abroad, and some of them in the most essential and fundamental points; as concerning the divinity or the humanity of Christ, the union of the two natures, and the like; about which some ignorant and some philosophical men vented most absurd and false opinions. So did the *Simonians*, the *Cerentians*, the *Ebionites*, the *Nicolaitans*, and other hereticks, even while the Apostles liv'd; as appears by the frequent admonitions and warnings left upon record, in their Epistles, against such doctrines. Thus early the enemy sow'd his tares; and the virgin Church



Church under the tuition of those inspired guardians, the Apostles themselves, could no more be secured from heresies *within*, than persecutions from *without*: And if the canker spread farther, and eat deeper in the following ages, it is not at all to be wonder'd. To such false prophets as these, this caution of our Saviour may be extended. But considering that his whole discourse foregoing was upon precepts *purely practical*, the morals of a virtuous christian life, as necessary to salvation; if we will suppose any connexion of this paragraph with all that went before, we must conclude he more particularly points at such false teachers as should *corrupt mens morals*, or (whether directly or indirectly) draw their minds from the simplicity and practice of those duties he had taught them. And amongst these may be reckoned,

(1.) THOSE who indulging the corrupt nature of man, *interpret away the strictness of our Saviour's precepts*. Who by any mis-conduct in their preaching, loosen the bonds of christian morality, and countenance a greater latitude in manners than the instructions of their Lord will justify. 'Tis not to be supposed that any of them will openly and plainly set themselves against religion, or commend or patronize any vice, but there are abundance of ways of doing the same thing in effect. As when they palliate any sinful and immoral habits under the stile of frailty and infirmities, which are not really so. When by a lax interpretation, they enervate the force of such prohibitions or commands in Scripture, as are really in the genuine sense and design of them, very strict and extensive; when they industriously avoid preaching against such particular sins, as they know some persons of their audience whom they have an interest to please, or fear to disoblige, are guilty of; or upon the like principle avoid insisting upon a severe and disagreeable duty:

Whereas

Whereas the Prophet *Isaiah* was commanded (and 'tis the part of every christian teacher) \* *to cry aloud, not to spare, to lift up his voice like a trumpet, and shew the people their transgressions and their sins*; which surely may and ought to be done, without any rude and personal reflections; the sin and not the sinner must be struck at; religion be promoted, but without malice or faction. Another way whereby 'tis possible to encourage sin, instead of preaching against it, is, exalting the mercy of God in such an absolute manner, as to leave men under a vain dependence upon it; or not plainly and expressly to contradict those hopes, while they continue under the wilful practice and indulgence of their sins. Such were those false prophets whom God complains of, by the mouth of *Jeremiah*, † *They have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace.* I shall only instance in one other method, which is a great injustice to the severe morality of the Gospel, and I'm afraid has often proved of very ill consequence in buoying men up in a fatal security under a vicious course of life; and that is the flattering eulogies and characters given in *funeral sermons*, to persons who with the credit perhaps of one or two virtues, have lived under the guilt of many notorious vices: Or the crying up *others* for saints and perfect patterns of goodness, who lived but the common life of men, or but a little better; sober, and perhaps honest; constant at Church, and fair in their dealings; but of whom nothing else appears, so exemplary either in positive virtues, or in their exercise of piety, as may justify such a canonization. Now what must the audience naturally imagine hereupon, they knew the person deceased, he was one of their neighbour-

\* Isa. lviii. 1.

† Jer. vi. 14.

hood; they knew him to have given himself many liberties, whilst he lived in what they call good fellowship, or in profane swearing, or in lewdness, or at best, we'll suppose they knew no harm by him? What must they conclude, when they hear the minister so extravagant in his praise, but that, according to the doctrine of their spiritual guide, if a man signalize himself but in some one virtue, he is in a safe way enough to heaven, though he indulge himself in a course of many grievous sins? A Lord have mercy, when he is departing, shall be call'd repentance; and a confident ill-grounded presumption, shall pass for faith in Christ; and then all is well with him, as if he had lived the most strict and sanctified life that could be. Or on supposition of the latter case, the harmless honest man, who in all outward appearance was neither very good, nor very bad; must not the audience conclude, when they hear him cry'd up for a saint, that such a life as his, is even more than enough to bring them to heaven; that to be so good, is a sort of supererogation, and that they are abundantly secured of being happy hereafter, though they should fall a little short of him, when yet comparing all that appear'd in him, with the strict rules of the Gospel, we are far from being sure, that he himself is happy; and therefore should not be told with so much confidence that he is? But whatever secret virtues he had, which do not appear to us, they may avail (and we may charitably suppose there were such) as to his own salvation; yet what we did not see, we cannot imitate, and therefore his outward conversation only will be no safe guide for ours.

(2.) ANOTHER sort of false teachers, whom doubtless our Saviour had in view, when he gave this caution, are those *who with greater appearances of sanctity and devotion, will be refining upon his* *scheme*

*scheme by superstitious additions of their own.* Men cannot be too holy, or too devout; but they may be seduced to place devotion and holiness in that which really is not so. Sincerity and fervency, together with an humble, decent, unaffected seriousness in posture, *make devotion in prayer.* A reverent attendance upon God's word and sacraments; a strict conscientious obedience paid to all his laws; an uniform love and practice of every virtue, and every duty towards God, our neighbour, and our selves, according as they are traced out to us in the holy Scriptures, *is religion.* But what have some men substituted in the room of these, who teach men to place devotion in the *number* or *length* of prayers, instead of fervency; and to place religion in a round of pompous formalities, and a thousand superstitious observances, which God has never commanded? This may be fancy and folly, but it cannot be religion; 'tis going out of the plain road to heaven, which Christ has shewn us, into the by-paths of human invention, which a jealous God will never countenance; and those that teach men to do thus, are certainly false teachers and seducers. There is indeed a principle within us, which will not suffer men to be without a concern for pleasing God in some way or other: They must have a religion, whatever it is. And therefore consulting their own lusts and appetites as much as they can, they are most easily persuaded to take up with a *mechanical* religion, consisting chiefly in an *outward* road of *performances*, how laborious and expensive soever they may be, than in such a *genuine* devotion, and *strict* virtue, as the laws of God prescribe: And thus they vainly think to compound with God, and their own consciences, by abundance of the *form*, to supply their deficiencies in, and their neglect of the *vital power* of godliness. Thus did the *Pharisees*, who to ease themselves of the  
the

the harder duties of *loving God with all their heart, with all their soul, and with all their strength, and loving their neighbours as themselves*, found a way to be satisfied with an outward ceremonious purity, the *washing of cups, and pots, and brazen vessels*, with many other the like trifling observances, instead of the weightier matters of the law; postponing the commandments of God, and rendering them of no effect, by placing religion where God had never placed it. Well may it be ask'd of such, at the great day, *Who has required these things at your hands?* I must add a third sort of false teachers, equally included in this caution.

(3.) THOSE who teach and require any doctrine or doctrines to be received, *as a necessary condition of salvation*; which were not taught and enforced as such, by our Saviour and his Apostles. Now whether it be in faith or practice, or both, to preach or publish a doctrine as an essential part of the christian religion, and a necessary term and condition of Salvation, which was not so taught by Christ and his Apostles, though not a doctrine contrary to what they taught, is to pervert the christian religion, and to corrupt the professors of it. Christ has not left it in the power of the ministers or officers of his Church, to add any new doctrine to his religion. St. Paul, who was an *Apostle* (as he describes himself in the beginning of his Epistle to the Galatians) *not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father*; to whom, as he says farther, even the known pillars of the christian Church, James, Cephas, and John, gave the right hand of fellowship, viz. received him as a companion equal to themselves; even this great Apostle disclaim'd all power of teaching any other doctrine than what the Apostles had preach'd, and the Churches received. *But though we, or an angel from heaven, says he, preach any other gospel unto you, than that*  
we

*we have preach'd unto you, let him be accursed.* Which shews, that the foundation of the christian religion was *already* laid, and that the Gospel which was then preach'd, was not only immutable, but also *sufficient*: And that neither the inspired Apostles, nor the unfinning angels might either add to it, or take away from it. But here I must interpose this caution, that though the *essential* parts of the christian religion cannot be altered, nor can there be any thing added thereto, nor taken away by any power upon earth: Yet our Saviour has committed into the hands of the ministers of his kingdom, a power not only to proclaim and divulge, to enforce and urge, to maintain and defend, but also to explicate and unfold those essential articles, according to occasions and emergencies, and in proportion to the rule of Scripture, and the analogy of faith. Moreover, our Saviour has entrusted with the ministers of his Church, a power to make constitutions and canons relating to the external regiment thereof, as also to frame liturgies, and public offices, for the solemn worship of God, and the administration of the sacraments; to appoint times and places of worship, to determine smaller controversies for peace and unity sake, and to prevent schism and division. All this the ministers of Christ may do, and be *true and faithful teachers*; but to teach any doctrine, contrary to the doctrines of the Gospel, or to *add any thing new*, as an essential part of the christian religion, which was not made so by Christ and his Apostles, is to be a false prophet.

(4.) *AND lastly*, Such also may be look'd upon as false teachers, or seducers from the true way of salvation, the practical piety and virtue of the Gospel, *who are continually entertaining their congregation with unnecessary disputes in religion*, and turning their heads and hearts to an over-eager zeal for notions,

tions, that are either uncertain, or of little importance. How many such teachers are there in the world, who think themselves happy enough, if they can but start some new speculation to spend their zeal upon; and holy enough, if they do but seriously advance in their instructions some point of doctrine (perhaps a mere opinion) which happens in their time to be deny'd by others, or oppose what others have asserted, though the point in debate is *lana caprina*, an inconsiderable insignificant thing to salvation, which a man may know or be ignorant of, believe or disbelieve, without being at all nearer to, or farther off from the kingdom of heaven? And what's the consequence of this teaching? It sublimates religion to such niceties, as to make it wholly evaporate at length in a set of airy and useless notions; and draws off the application of men's minds, and the warmth and vigour of their spirits, from the practice of christian duties and virtues, to things that are not only little to the purpose of their eternal happiness, and which will never enter into account at the examination in the day of judgment, whether they held the one side, or the other; but which really have a consequence directly opposite; as these opinions prejudice them with a furious and uncharitable bigotry, and perhaps a spirit of persecution, (if it lye in their power to exert it,) against those that think not as they do. I speak not here of such doctrinal points, as the divinity of Christ; or any other which may be clearly proved from Scripture, to be essential to the christian religion, and consequently to our salvation by Christ. To preach up these steddily and zealously, is but earnestly to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints; but I speak of matters as are more disputable, more uncertain, and of less concern, I will not name them. Let every teacher carefully and impartially examine  
his

his doctrine by the word of God, and let none of us be wise above what is written there; nor trouble our selves; nor amuse our audience with \* *doctrines which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.* I proceed now to shew,

II. *THE marks whereby a false prophet may be discerned.* As to these I have in a great measure fore-stalled my self, in what I have said already; for describing the *false teachers*, I could no other way do it, than by describing those *doctrines* which denominate and shew them to be such. The evil tendency therefore of their doctrines, and of their way of teaching, to divert men from the esteem and practice of holiness, being pointed out by our Saviour himself, as the chief mark whereby to discover these false prophets, (*For by their fruits, says he, ye shall know them,*) and this being sufficiently spoken of under the foregoing head; I shall not need to insist upon it here again. But there are two other marks, that may help us in the discovery of them, worthy to be considered, *pride* and *covetousness*: The one or the other of these being the governing principle, that induces such men to their corrupt teaching, will some way or other shew it self in their conduct, if it be well observed, and therefore they may stand for farther tokens, to distinguish them from the true ministers of Christ.

(I.) *PRIDE* is very conspicuous in them, notwithstanding their great dissimulation. A secret thirst of being famed and talk'd of, makes them uneasy to be restrain'd to the ordinary road of preaching up a good life, according to the plain and practicable tenor of the Gospel. They have here no latitude to shew their parts, or recommend

\* Heb. xiii. 9.



their learning, and raise themselves a reputation, which they are vain enough to believe they merit, and therefore they affect either *novelties* in doctrine, that their understanding and wisdom may seem to be much above the level of their brethren, or a disputative and eager zeal for some party, or some opinion already advanced by others, which they know is a popular way of entertaining an audience, whose passions are more easily and more acceptably gratified than their reason, and who had rather be taught to rest themselves upon the *borders* of religion, than to be led into the *heart* and *bowels* of it, in such duties as they do not care to practise. They know that the vicious part of mankind is much the greatest, and consequently to obtain a general applause, they must not bear too hard upon vice: They must sew pillows under mens arm-holes, and bolster them up in an easy sort of religion, that will bring them only to the *surface* of morality; and even this for *form-sake*, for corrupt nature it self can hardly be content without it; but to tell men roundly of their sins, to press them to a thorough repentance and amendment; to put them upon the necessary exercise of all christian virtues and duties, and to tell them plainly, there is no salvation, but in the way of sincere and serious holiness; this they imagine would spoil their credit with the people, and therefore they preach to them what is infinitely *less* to the purpose of religion, but *much more* to *their own*. Sometimes indeed, when religion happens to be in repute, their affectations must correspond with it; and then it is observable, they carry things to an extream: They screw religion up to superstition, and even their garb, their gesture, their voice, their phraseology or expression, and every thing else about them, is affected, that they may by these means come to be taken notice of, and pass for men of extraordinary  
strictness

strictness and holiness, knowledge and spiritual gifts; these singularities being mighty apt to strike people with a veneration for them. And thus the vanity of being admired, will shew it self in different shapes; in some more directly, by an haughty air, an imperious conversation, a positive and pompous way of preaching, a vain-glorious boasting mighty things of themselves, and an affectation of shewing their parts and learning: In others more craftily, by an affected false humility, put on only to excite the rest of the world, to praise and cry them up. Be ever jealous therefore what a proud man teaches, compare it carefully with the Scriptures, and the explications of better men, and if it agree not with the latter, 'tis reasonable to be suspected; if it agree not with the former, he is certainly a false teacher. But if nothing of pride, or its consequences appear in him, let it be well considered, whether there is not,

(2.) *COVETOUSNESS*, or a worldly interest, driving on, in his doctrine, and discernable in his behaviour. That this is a principle very natural to false teachers, by which they are most commonly acted (and whereby they may easily be discovered) St. Paul intimates to us, when he speaks of some in his time, *\*Who subverted whole houses, teaching things they ought not, for filthy lucre sake.* And so in his Epistle to the Romans also, he forewarns them, *† Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learn'd, and avoid them: for they that are such, serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by good words and fair speeches, deceive the hearts of the simple.* St. Peter also has left it upon record, that such there would be in after ages of the Church. *‡ There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall*

\* Tit. i. 11.

† Rom. xvi. 17.

‡ 2 Pet. ii. 1.

*shall bring in damnable heresies, &c. And through covetousness shall they with feign'd words make merchandize of you. The love of riches makes them teach what will please, rather than what will edify; puts them forward to a disputative and party zeal, as more for their purpose, than inculcating piety and a good life: Dependance makes them afraid to speak out plainly against sin, or the sordid thirst and prospect of some gain, induces them to flatter the vices of their audience, by unfaithful and corrupt interpretations of the word of God; or the like greedy humour stirs them up to frame such new doctrines, or advance such convenient superstitions, as make to their own profit and advantage. Whereas a true minister of Christ, \* seeks not his own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved. † Wrongs no man, corrupts no man, defrauds no man. ‡ Neither at any time uses flattering words, nor a cloke of covetousness, || as false teachers do, but preaches the word of God with all boldness; whether it shall please or displease, and be an advantage or disadvantage to him. ∴ In all things shewing himself a pattern of good works; in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity.*

\* 1 Cor. x. 33.

† 2 Cor. ii. 7.

‡ 1 Thes. ii. 5.

|| Acts iv. 29.

∴ Tit. ii. 7.





## C H A P. XXIV.

### *Of the Necessity of obeying the foregoing Precepts.*

MATTH. vii. 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27.

*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: But he that doeth the will of my Father, which is in heaven.*

*Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works?*

*And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: Depart from me ye that work iniquity.*

*Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:*

*And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house: And it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock.*

*And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:*

*And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house: And it fell, and great was the fall of it.*



THE conclusion of this most excellent sermon of our Lord, does very aptly crown the whole with one general and most important doctrine, that the *performance* of his precepts, the *living up in practice* to that noble scheme of religion which he has left us, is the only *effectual* proof that we are Christians, the only *safe foundation* for our hopes of heaven. Or if I may be allow'd to express his sense in other words, it is as follows;

“ HAVING revealed to you the will of God so perfectly, that it is impossible for you now to be mistaken in your duty, I expect that ye, my Disciples, should be as exact in your obedience, as I have been in my revelation: For the bare profession of my religion, the calling me Lord, Lord, without a practice conformable to such a profession, will be of no advantage to you at the day of judgment. Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, have not we sufficiently proved our discipleship by our extraordinary zeal for thy service, and great performances in thy name; such as prophesying, casting out devils, and doing many wonderful works? These surely will entitle us to thy favour and thy kingdom; acknowledge us therefore as thy followers, and receive us into everlasting happiness. But my answer to such vain pretenders will be, that though

“ though they taught my religion, yet since they  
“ did not practise it; tho’ they cast devils out of  
“ others, yet since they did not cast all wickedness  
“ out of their own hearts; tho’ they wrought  
“ many wonderful works, yet since at the same  
“ time, they wrought unrighteousness, they are no  
“ disciples of mine. Hence from my presence, *all*  
“ *ye workers of iniquity.* For without a strict and  
“ conscientious obedience to my laws, in the course  
“ of an holy and religious life, Christianity is but an  
“ empty name, zeal for it but a wrangling and  
“ contentious heat, salvation but an idle and de-  
“ ceitful hope. He therefore, who not only  
“ hears my precepts but obeys them, who orders  
“ his life and conversation by the rule of God’s  
“ word, as I have delivered it to him, is like a  
“ wise man who lays the foundation of his house  
“ upon a rock, which thus founded stands firm  
“ and secure against all the violence of winds and  
“ waves. But he who grounds his hopes of ac-  
“ ceptance and salvation on any other bottom  
“ than such sincere obedience, is like a man who  
“ builds his house upon the sand; which not be-  
“ ing able to withstand the fury of a tempest, or  
“ an impetuous tide, will certainly be beaten down  
“ about him, upon the first attacks of either, and  
“ thus his house shall perish.

SINCE not our *hearing* only, but our *doing of the will of God*, is declared by the Author of our salvation to be the rock alone, whereon we may safely build our hopes of it; my business must be to shew the meaning of this expression, or what is here to be understood by *doing the will of God*. It is, in general, the being obedient to Christ’s laws, the doing of those holy and righteous works which he ordain’d we should walk in, the fulfilling all righteousness established in the Gospel, and delivered in this sermon. But to present you

with a more distinct explication of this, we are to consider,

I. THAT however diligent, zealous and successful we may be in doing those things, which serve to *propagate* and *support* Christianity, or accidentally relate to it, as *means* and *instruments* of true religion, 'tis not sufficient to reach the extent of what is comprised in this expression, *of doing the will of God*. Men are not therefore the true disciples of Christ, and effectually entituled to salvation, because they can defend the truths of Christianity, or labour hard to gain proselytes to it, or even work miracles in behalf of it; not because they constantly attend the preaching of God's word, the prayers of the Church, or private devotions of their own, or reading their Bible, or other instructive books of religion at certain times of leisure. These things, tho' good and excellent in their kind, tho' of great use and service to the Church, tho' very advantageous to their own or other mens souls, are yet but the means and instruments, not the end and substance of religion. Attending diligently upon the outward means of grace, is a duty necessary to every Christian; but not for its own sake only; if we stop there, 'tis all but vain formality and hypocrisy: 'Tis requisite with relation to faith and a good life, but if they lead us not effectually to these, they will never bring us to salvation. And therefore our Saviour declares, that at the day of judgment he will answer all such after this manner, *I never knew you*; that is, I never approved or allowed of those faculties and powers ye pretend to, *as the condition* of being my disciples; and yet that was the great power of prophesying, and doing miracles; as appears by the presence they are brought in to make, *Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have*

*have cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works.* But since the great condition of the Gospel, is obedience to the law of righteousness; and that *every one who nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity*; they who are as well workers of iniquity as workers of miracles, who preach the word of God, but practise it not, cannot expect the portion and inheritance of the disciples of Christ. To this purpose is that discourse of St. Paul to the Corinthians, \* *Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels, have the gift of prophecies, understand mysteries and knowledge, have a faith strong enough to remove mountains, if I have no charity with all these, I am nothing.* And therefore tho' he allows the acquisition of spiritual gifts for the service and edification of the Church; yet he there plainly prefers charity before all of that nature, as being the substance of that condition required by Christ: for *love is the fulfilling of the law*, whereas the other is only the instrument or ornament of it in the world. But then,

II. WE are also to consider, that every *sudden and imperfect* act of religion, tho' it more immediately tend to holiness, and may be the *beginning* or a *branch* of it, every *partial sketch* of virtue and goodness, tho' necessary and commendable, so far as it goes, is not therefore to be accounted fulfilling of the main condition, or sufficient to be called a *doing of the will of God*: For as the former might be compared to the producing of leaves, the yielding of some ornament and protection to Christianity; so *this* may be resembled to the bringing forth of buds and blossoms, which yet arise not to the bearing of fruit. And it is very plain, that every inclination and good affection for religion, every

\* 1 Cor. xiii. 1.



honest purpose and resolution, every sudden act of contrition and humiliation, and instances of the like nature, which are but the *beginnings* of religion, are not to be esteem'd and character'd as fit conditions of acceptance and discipleship. If they stay there, the duty is only in its greens, in the first draught and shadows; and if it never come to finishing, the men are like those creatures which imperfectly resemble the human shape, the *more deformed* for the *rude conformity*. A picture of this we have in the description \* *St. Paul* has given us; where he brings in one justifying the law of God, that it is holy, just and good, but yet he did not observe it; he accuses himself for what he did, and what he did not: *For the good that I would, that I do not; and the evil that I would not, that I do*; that by virtue of his inward man he delighted in the law of God; but yet by the strength of another law in his members, contending and struggling against the force of this, he was enslaved and captivated to the law of sin; he had many good affections by times, but no good thing abiding in him; his will was often right, and he resolved and purposed many excellent things, but still he was defective in the performance. This is the character of one who is *set forward* in his work, but *goes not on with it*: And of this temper we shall meet with many in the world, who have their fits of repentance, prayer and fasting; who hear much, and are angry with themselves, condemn their own follies, and think it reasonable they should live better: All which are excellent lines of duty, and fair beginnings; but then they fill them up with such a mixture of impurity, such ill colours, and foul blemishes, and frequent apostacies, that they destroy their own foundation: They would

\* Rom. vii.

tain be better, but yet they are not; nay, they go as far as *Herod*, who not only heard *John Baptist* gladly, but *did many things*; and farther than *Felix*, being *fully persuaded* they should be Christians; and they do thus much towards it, that they correct some follies, put a stop to some vicious habits, use the solemnities of religion, and are very punctual and severe in some external observations of it; but then they are weary, they will go no farther, they grow confident and careless, and having done *something*, fancy they have done *enough* for heaven, while sin still retains its hold; and the strong man keeps possession. All this is represented by our Saviour, in the parable of the seed, where that which fell on the stony ground, or amongst thorns, or by the way-side; although it spring up for a time, grows into some degrees of height and fairness, yet is lost before the time of harvest, and there is no fruit arises from it. These are so far from being true disciples, that they are the stain and the reproach of their profession; and instead of the rewards assured unto that fellowship, they shall find those contrary ones, of him who knew his master's will, and did it not, *they shall be beaten with many stripes*. But here, this caution is to be interposed, that since the strength and power of religion grows by the measures of a man, by easy and undiscernable degrees, that we be careful not to give an ill name to every state of imperfection: The Apostles used the compellation of babes and little children to such as were in this infancy of religion; and such may be allowed, because they are growing up, their strength encreases, they still rise higher in their profession, and these are kindly and tenderly to be treated; but we are not speaking of the children, but the *dwarfs* in religion; people of no stature, and of as little hopes, who are already risen to their full pitch, when they may be said to have but begun:

gun: and surely these are very unworthy the stile of disciples, whose measure it is to be perfect, as their Father which is in heaven is perfect. But then,

III. THIRDLY, Since neither of these will satisfy the condition, what it is that will? And here the answer must be in general, *doing the will of God, or a life of holiness and good works*, springing from a principle of *faith in Christ*. For thus stand the terms of the new covenant, which God has made with us through Christ our Redeemer. \* *He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.* Here is *everlasting life* promised by God, but *faith in Christ* exacted as the condition to be performed on our part. But St. James has told us, that *faith without works is dead*; and lest we should mistake in so important a concern as the terms of our salvation, St. Paul (who has said as much of justification by faith as any body) has most clearly open'd the terms of this covenant, with regard to works also, when he thus represents the engagement both on God's part and ours. † *The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his; and let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity.* God is pleased to engage on his part to take care of us in a particular manner, and to save us; but then our part of the covenant is, to *depart from iniquity*; that is, to live in an entire obedience to the commands and prohibitions laid before us in the Gospel. And this is a condition so absolutely necessary, that he elsewhere represents it as the great design and end of our redemption. ‡ *Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem*

\* John iii. 36.

† 2 Tim. ii. 19.

‡ Tit. ii. 14.

us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. The grace of God appear'd for this purpose, to teach us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world. So that when we speak of *faith*, as that which saves us, we mean such a belief in Christ, our Saviour and Law-giver, as makes us chearfully give up our selves to the conduct of his spirit; obedience to his laws, and dependance upon his sacrifice, to render us and all that we can do acceptable to his heavenly Father. When we insist upon *good works*, 'tis as the genuine effect of such a true faith; and such an effect, as if it do not follow and appear, our faith is vain, and all our hopes of heaven deceitful. From this close connexion between faith and good works, it is, that when either are named, as the condition of salvation, the other is understood. And therefore, *doing the will of God*, includes both *believing in Christ*, and living up to that practical rule of *righteousness*, which he has ordain'd for us to walk by. For thus our Saviour determined in answer to the question of those auditors, who demanded what they must do to work the works of God? \**This is the work of God* (says he) *that ye believe on him, whom he hath sent.* Here then we have a large prospect: for that we may be the disciples of Christ, we are to believe his revelation, and to obey his commands, and to reverence him as our Saviour and Law-giver, and in imitation of him to put on the form and habit of a new creature; in newness of life, a course of christian holiness and virtues; sobriety with regard to our selves, justice and charity towards our neighbour, piety and zeal towards God. This is the great purpose of St. *James*, in his discourse con-

\* John vi. 29.

cerning the perfection of the christian life, in the strict union of faith and good works, where he assigns a just portion of duty to both: for he who believes, does what he ought. \* *Thou believest*, says he, *that there is one God, thou dost well*; but then believing alone is not enough, *for faith without works is dead*, and the religion of it is no more than the evil spirits are able to practise, *the devils also believe and tremble*. The Apostle represents it by the insignificancy of the kind words of him, who bids his needy brother depart in peace, and get him better cloaths and fuller provisions, but still assists him not in either; the neglect betrays the charity, and the man is yet as naked as before; Even so faith, altho' it be the profession of the truth, and those sound words which Christ revealed; yet when it stands thus by it self, assists nothing to virtue and the perfection of religion; it is but naked, nay, worse than that, says the Apostle, *it is dead*: But when it inspires and actuates all the remaining parts of duty, when it is an argument and a principle, when it provokes to holiness, when it convinces the man, and supports his religion; then a Christian may be said to be doing the will of God: and this is to arrive to the degree of a new creature, *viz.* to live the life of Christ, to keep the commandments of God, to do the work and business of renewed and transform'd people, to live after the spirit, and not after the flesh; which being the old and natural principle, is unfit to govern the new life. And now that we have gone thus far, ye may imagine, that there is nothing farther to be added: But there is one word remaining, which can by no means be spared from this argument. Our endeavours must extend to *ALL the will of God*, and not to some parts only. Therefore,

\* Jam. ii. 19.

IV. *FOURTHLY*, Let it be observed, the true disciple of Christ sets no bounds to his obedience: He neither straitens it with regard to the *subject*, nor the *degree* or *measure*. He does not pick and chuse what commands he will comply with, and reject the rest; he does not single out the most easy, grateful, popular, or advantageous virtues; but as cheerfully takes up the yoke of the most difficult and painful, the most unpopular and self-denying, whenever providence puts an occasion for them in his way. He does not only adhere to his duty while the sea is smooth, the weather fair, and the wind favourable; but under the roughest storms of temptation, affliction, or persecution: He will not recede in any point from a good conscience, let what will happen; his duty he both knows and does, the event he leaves to God. Nor will he stint his virtues as to the growth and measure of them; he knows he can never be too good, and therefore he incessantly labours to grow better; he daily strives to improve in a more nice and strict obedience to all God's commands, in a more fervent and devout performance of all duties, and in a more exalted degree, and a more exact practice of every virtue. In short, he aims at *perfection*, though in this life he cannot reach it: The love of God constrains him; he would be like God; because he loves *him*, and is therefore in love with holiness. he thinks (and he thinks truly too) that he does not sufficiently do the will of God, if he can satisfy himself with any thing short of an exact and persevering conformity thereto: for we are expressly commanded by our holy Master, \* *to be perfect, as our Father which is in heaven is perfect*; that is, sincerely to endeavour to come as near the pattern of

\* Mat. v. 48.

his excellent holiness as we can, by copying it in all manner of virtues, and in the most exalted height of them. So St. Paul exhorts also, \* *I beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus Christ, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk, and to please God, ye would abound more and more.* And so St. Peter too, † *Giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity: for if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.* Where ye see plainly, that it is required, not only that these things should be in us, but that we should abound in them; and by this continual and industrious progress towards perfection, we shall make it appear we are true Christians. If it be demanded, whether this height of perfection, or continual industry to attain it, be so necessary, that we cannot be true disciples of Christ without it? I answer, That ‡ *he alone belongs to Christ, who hath the Spirit of Christ abiding in him;* and where the Spirit of Christ dwells, it will assuredly possess a man with a most ardent desire and ambition to be whatever Christ would have him, and to speak and act, as Christ would speak and act upon a like occasion; it will always stimulate and excite to farther degrees of holiness, because he inwardly delights in the law of God, and is thoroughly convinced of the reasonableness, the pleasure, and the excellence of the divine life. I answer also, that though 'perfection cannot be attain'd in this life, and therefore we may be Christians *without attaining* it; yet our duty herein is so

\* 1 Thes. iv. 1.

† 2 Pet. i. 5.

‡ Rom. viii. 9.

plainly

plainly laid down, that I dare by no means say we can be saved *without sincerely and diligently aiming* at it, and coming up to it *as nearly* as we may; and though Almighty God may please, out of the fulness of his mercy, to *accept of less*, yet since he *requires so much*, it must be look'd upon as the only safe rock, whereon to lay the foundation of a Christian's hopes of happiness. Perhaps this may offend those who are for getting to heaven *with as little trouble as they can*, and are for no more virtue, piety and goodness, than they think will just serve to save them: But this cannot be help'd; for we must be faithful, and in setting down the measures of duty, we are not to examine what men usually do, or what they have a mind to do, but what God requires of them.

THUS (by the blessing of God) I have finished my explication of this most excellent sermon of our Saviour in the mount, and have endeavoured to shew the true meaning, latitude, and extent of every precept: And were this noble scheme of religion put in practice by all those that pretend to be the disciples of Christ, how glorious and how comfortable a place would even this world be: which, on the contrary, neglecting these rules, which would make them happy, as well as holy, it is filled with violence and injustice, feuds and factions, impiety, profaneness, and hypocrisy, lewdness and debauchery, censoriousness and hard-heartedness, and every vice that may make one another uneasy here, or lead to eternal misery hereafter.

WHAT yet remains, is only to consider the historical conclusion of the Evangelist upon this sermon, and his general observation of the *manner* of our Saviour's teaching, and the *effect* of it.





## The CONCLUSION.

MATTH. vii. 28, 29.

*And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine.*

*For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes.*



THESE are the words of the Evangelist St. Matthew, wherein he shews what effect our Saviour's most excellent sermon had upon the audience, *The people were astonished at his doctrine.*

And likewise what it was that made that impression upon them, viz. the *difference* there was in the authority of his teaching, from that of the Scribes. Let us therefore look into the ground of their astonishment, the *difference* they observed in our Saviour's way of teaching, from that of the Scribes. The Evangelist expresses it thus, He taught them *ἐξουσίᾳ* ἰσχυρῶς, as one that had power or authority, and not as the Scribes. Commentators differ in explaining this word *ἐξουσία*, which our translation renders *authority*; but including the several of their interpretations, and adding farther what I take to be implied

implied therein, I shall sum up the differences of our Saviour's teaching, from that of the *Jewish* doctors, so far as I think was here intended by that distinguishing character of *authority* or *power*, under the following heads.

(1.) HE taught them *as a Prophet sent from God* to perfect and compleat the revelation of his will, and *not as a merely human teacher*. The spirit of prophecy had ceased in the Church for several ages; the Scribes did not pretend to it. They only taught what they had learn'd in the schools of their *Rabbi's*, explain'd and commented upon the sacred text; and this very corruptly too. But our Saviour knowing that he was come from God, with full authority not only to rescue the moral law from their false glosses, but to refine upon the text it self, not only to explain, but to improve and perfect it, express'd himself in a manner suitable to his high commission. *Ye have been taught*, says he, *by your learned doctors, so and so; BUT I SAY UNTO YOU, thus and thus*. Here therefore, was an air of authority in his preaching, which the *Scribes* neither did nor could pretend to, and which accordingly his audience knew nothing of before.

(2.) THIS authority in his preaching was attended with, and illustrated by a *power of working miracles*; which evidently shewed him to be a teacher more than human. For though this upon the mount was one of his first sermons, yet even before this (yea, and immediately before it) he had gone about *healing all manner of sicknesses, and all manner of diseases amongst the people*. And the admiration of this divine power in him, it was that actually drew the multitude together about him, when he deliver'd this excellent sermon. Here therefore, was such a proof of his prophetic mission, such an authority added to his discourses, as

must needs amaze the people, who had never known any thing like it from their other teachers.

(3.) THE *matter* of his doctrine was every way worthy of a teacher sent from God. The *Scribes* indeed entertain'd the people with a set of idle traditions, superstitions, and trifling observances, and many little exactnesses in ceremony: But our Lord instructed them in the weightier matters of the law, laid out to them a most divine and excellent scheme of morals, and taught the *inside*, as well as the *outside* of religion. He would not suffer them to rest satisfied with the formal shews, or with the outward mechanism of virtue; but carried his precepts *to the heart*, requir'd sincerity in the inward man, and thereby also shewed an authority to which the *Scribes* could not pretend: For who can impose laws upon the *heart*, the *thoughts* and the *desires* of man, but God who made him, and sent our blessed Lord, his only and eternal Son, to instruct and govern him?

(4.) AND lastly, these precepts were delivered with such a *certainty*, *boldness*, and *plainness*, as far excelled the teaching of the *Scribes*. They, as being guided only by the opinions of their schools, could deliver nothing clearly, and with a full assurance; and as human *ignorance* might mislead them, so did human *passions* too: They were to oblige the people by servile and undue compliances, enervating the law of God by such interpretations, as would gratify the pride, and other vices of their congregation, or give such a turn to religion, as would best serve their own base and worldly interests. On the contrary, our Saviour's teaching was with a positive and definitive certainty, becoming one who thoroughly knew the mind of God, one in whom was hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, in whom dwelt all the fulness of the  
 Godhead

Godhead bodily. \* *For he whom God hath sent (saith John the Baptist, speaking of our Saviour) speaketh the words of God; for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.* And as he delivered his precepts with an authoritative *certainly*, so he delivered them with an authoritative boldness and impartiality : He had no occasion to fear that any thing in his own conduct should reproach him with his own precepts. He boldly delivered the most severe doctrines and instructions, not caring whom they would displease; he *search'd* the wounds of that imperfect and corrupt morality the Scribes had taught them, *to the bottom*, as knowing that this was necessary to set them right, and bring them into the healing way of Salvation, though their false guides would storm at it, and the people too would probably be offended to be undeceiv'd, and put upon a more laborious and effectual strictness than that to which they had hitherto been trained.

Thus I have explained, as well as I am able, the difference betwixt our *Saviour's teaching*, and that of the *Scribes*, in respect to the *authority* and *power* with which he preach'd, according to the Evangelists observation. I shall conclude with a few words to recommend the excellency of the revelation made by Christ, (including the *whole system* of it, as well as *this his sermon on the mount*) which should farther affect us Christians with a special regard to it. And here particularly, we are to consider, that it was the revelation, not of an inferior Prophet, though commissioned and inspired from heaven; but of the *eternal Son of God*, under the disguise of human nature. And of how much greater authority such a revelation ought to be, we may learn from the author to the *Hebrews*,

\* John iii. 34.

\* *There-*

\* *Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience receiv'd a just recompence of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the LORD, and was confirm'd to us by them that heard him? And again, † Moses was faithful as a servant, but Christ as a Son, over his own house, or family, the Church. Thus does the Apostle amplify the authority of Christ's teaching, as being first revealed to the world, not by angels, not by prophets, not by usual and common messengers; but by the Son of God himself. We are to consider this revelation also as most clear and perspicuous. The most important truths were formerly hid in types and symbols. Moses had a glory upon his face, but a vail put upon that glory. But now the vail upon his face is ‡ done away in Christ, and we all with open face, as in a glass, behold the glory of the Lord. Now are the greatest truths and promises no more mask'd under types and shadows, but exposed unto us with open face. No precepts can be plainer or better than those which are given us by our Saviour. Were all the philosophers of former ages, were all the prophets that ever lived, were all the angels that are in heaven, summon'd to meet and consult together, to prescribe laws, and to propose motives to human nature, they could not add one useful thing to what Christ has revealed. He has forbidden whatever dishonours God, disturbs the world, or weakens and blemishes human nature, 'as pride, covetousness, sensuality, and all the other sins that flow from them; and on the*

\* Heb. ii. 1, 2, 3.

† Heb. iii. 5, 6.

‡ 2 Cor. iii. 14.

contrary,

contrary, has commanded whatever tends to the glory of our Creator, to the general welfare of mankind, and the ease and comfort of every single person; as, *Faith in God* for our support under all the uncertainties of this world; love to him, that we may enjoy him, and so be happy and blessed in him; *mutual love to one another*, and all the virtues thence arising, *meekness, patience, and humility*, that we may be easy to our selves, and also helpful each to other. And lastly, that we may want nothing to persuade or assist sincere obedience to these precepts, our Saviour assures us of God's grace to strengthen our weakness and infirmities. He threatens everlasting woes to obstinate and impenitent sinners, and he promises eternal happiness to every true and faithful penitent. We may add farther, that this revelation by Christ is the *very last revelation*, that God will ever make to the world, and therefore we ought to have the greatest regard imaginable to what he has delivered as the mind and will of God. All former revelations were but introductions to this, \* *Carnal ordinances*, says the Apostle, *imposed on the Jews, till the time of reformation*. This time of reformation, was the dispensation of the Gospel by our Saviour. † *God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in times past unto the fathers by the Prophets, has in these last days spoken unto us by his Son*. The Gospel therefore, is the last discovery and attempt of the divine wisdom, for the reformation of the world; nothing has since appear'd, or ever will appear, by divine authority and appointment, to make the least alteration in it. If ever we aim at, or expect eternal happiness, it must be in the way which Christ has taught us, upon those terms, upon that faith, and that scheme of piety and vir-

\* Heb. ix. 10.

† Heb. i. 1, 2.

tue, which *he* has prescribed to us. Let us therefore pray, in the words of our most excellent Church, *Blessed Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning; Grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of thy holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.*

F I N I S.











